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BY KEVIN CAREY

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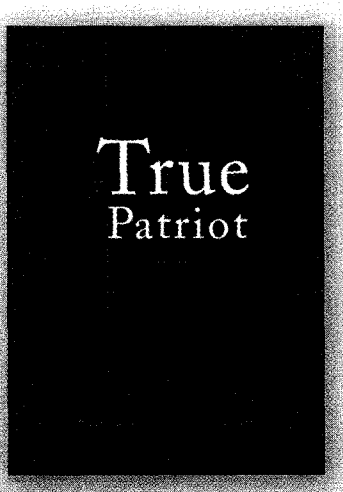

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Paul Glastris

Founding Editor
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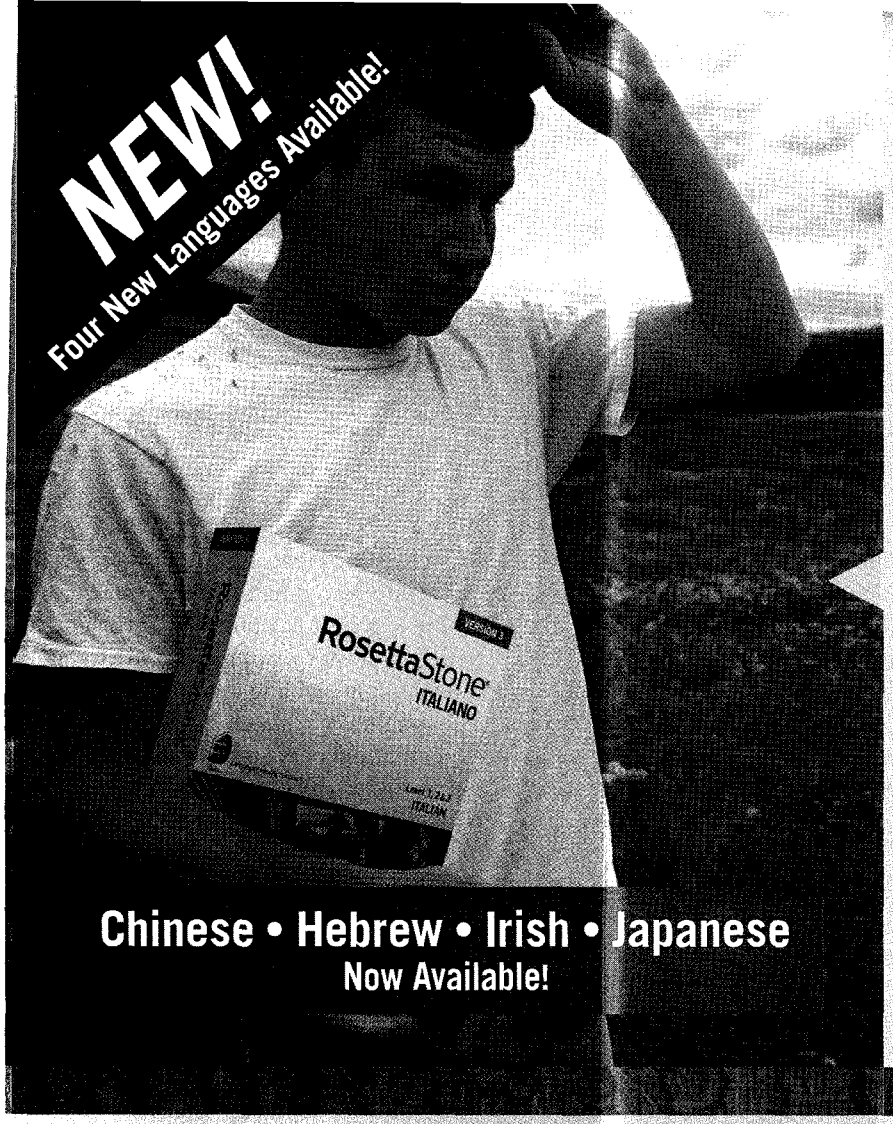

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Editor's Note

PAUL GLASTRIS

Service Interruption

Journalists tend to fall for Senator John McCain—and go easy on him in their coverage—for all the reasons you've heard of. The hours of unmediated access he gives reporters. The knowing winks he flashes them in the midst of a public pander. The frisson they feel in the presence of someone who showed such astonishing physical courage in war. And of course his record of bucking the GOP on everything from tax cuts to the religious right—a record of independence he has been squandering in the current presidential race.

What made me a confirmed McCain fan was an article he wrote for this magazine seven years ago. Entitled "Putting the 'National' in National Service," it was a rousing defense of AmeriCorps, the civilian service program begun by Bill Clinton. Every year, AmeriCorps sends tens of thousands of young people to work full time building low-income housing, running after-school programs, or helping small towns cope with the aftermath of natural disasters. In his piece, McCain admitted that he, like many congressional Republicans, opposed the creation of AmeriCorps in 1994. "We feared it would be another 'big government program,'" he wrote, "that would undermine true volunteerism, waste money in 'make-work' projects, or be diverted into political activism." But AmeriCorps' on the ground success made him a believer.

His only complaint, he wrote, is the program's low public profile—a consequence of the decentralized structure it was forced to take on in order to win some measure of Republican support. Most AmeriCorps members are deployed to work for nonprofits, like Habitat for Humanity. In practice, that means their identity as AmeriCorps members tends to get subsumed by the identities of the nonprofits where they work. As a result, most voters have never heard of AmeriCorps, even though it is by far the federal government's largest civilian service program, dwarfing the far-better-known Peace Corps. And a civilian service program that is largely invisible, McCain argued, cannot stir the public imagination and lead to "a resurgence of patriotic service in this country."

To that end, McCain called for expanding opportunities for both civilian and military service. In particular, he advocated increasing the size of elite AmeriCorps-run service programs like City Year and the National Civilian Community Corps, where members wear uniforms, work in teams, and create a sense of identity—in themselves and in the community—as being part of a proud national service organization.

Though I loved the policy ideas, what most impressed me about the article was how McCain placed national service at the center of his political philosophy. It is a philosophy that emerged from the life experiences he has written about in his books—of an unruly and directionless young man to whom military service brings unimaginable suffering, but also, eventually, honor and purpose. Equal parts civic republicanism and existentialism, with a dash of Pericles, it is a philosophy that attempts to square individual liberty with collective endeavor—a formula for living the good life in a modern capitalist democracy:

> *In America, our rights come before our duties, as well they should. We are a free people, and among our freedoms is the liberty to care or not care for our birthright. But those who claim their liberty but not their duty to the civilization that ensures it live a half-life, indulging their self-interest at the cost of their self-respect. The richest men and women possess nothing of real value if their lives have no greater object than themselves.*
>
> *Success, wealth, celebrity gained and kept for private interest—these are small things. They make us comfortable, ease the way for our children, and purchase a fleeting regard for our lives, but not the self-respect that, in the end, matters most. Sacrifice for a cause greater than self-interest, however, and you invest your life with the eminence of that cause.*

McCain incorporated his ideas on national service into legislation he co-sponsored with Senator Evan Bayh. And for a while, he fought for that legislation. But in recent years his enthusiasm for the subject seems to have waned. Maybe it's frustration with President Bush, who made bold promises after 9/11 to expand national service but did not break a fingernail in pursuit of that goal. Maybe it's the fact that McCain decided to make another run for the White House and needed the support of small-government conservatives, many of whom loathe AmeriCorps.

Whatever the reason, the Arizona senator has spent this presidential season eloquently exhorted young people to "serve a cause higher than self" while studiously avoiding mention of any new measures to create more opportunities for such service. He took a weeklong "Service to America" speaking tour this spring, during which he said nothing about national service. His website is bereft of information

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on the subject. When reporters ask his campaign for anything in writing on the candidate's national service agenda, they are sent copies of his 2001 *Washington Monthly* article.

As a matter of national policy, this is regrettable. America faces a growing list of unmet domestic needs—from weatherizing low-income homes to helping the elderly with daily chores to help them stay out of nursing homes—that neither the private sector nor traditional public sector bureaucracies are set up to solve. The only sensible way to deal with these vital needs is through a mobilization of volunteers empowered by the federal government. America also faces an overwhelming foreign policy need: to reclaim our good name, and with it some measure of the power we've lost. As Kenneth Ballen writes in this issue (see "Bin Laden's Soft Support," p.19), the quickest and easiest way to enhance our image overseas, even among the world's most alienated Muslims, would be a massive campaign of humanitarian aid delivered not by faceless agencies but by Americans themselves, be they from the military, the Peace Corps, or some other entity yet to be created.

While John McCain has gone silent on national service, Barack Obama is speaking up.

While McCain has gone silent on national service, his opponent has been speaking up. In an address last December, Barack Obama unveiled a plan to triple AmeriCorps, double the Peace Corps, expand service opportunities for middle-aged and older Americans, turn a quarter of all college work-study jobs into community service positions, and offer a $4,000 tuition tax credit to anyone who completes one hundred hours of service. He expanded on these ideas in a much-celebrated commencement address this spring at Wesleyan College.

Like McCain, Obama roots his commitment to national service in his own life story: his choice, only half-understood at the time, to become a community organizer on Chicago's South Side. Though his story lacks the gripping drama and heroism of McCain's tale, it is not without charm ("Day after day, I heard 'no' a lot more than I heard 'yes.' I saw plenty of empty chairs in those meetings we put together.") Eventually, as his efforts led to successful voter registration drives and the like, Obama discovered, as did McCain, a higher patriotic purpose. "I found a community that embraced me; a church to belong to; citizenship that was meaningful; the direction I'd been seeking." Obama also fashioned from his service experience a philosophy of civic purpose, one he described to the Wesleyan graduates:

> *There's no community service requirement in the real world; no one forcing you to care. You can take your diploma, walk off this stage, and chase only after the big house and the nice suits and all the other things that our money culture says you should buy. You can choose to narrow your concerns and live your life in a way that tries to keep your story separate from America's.*
>
> *But I hope you don't. Not because you have an obligation to those who are less fortunate, though you do have that obligation. Not because you have a debt to all those who helped you get here, though you do have that debt.*
>
> *It's because you have an obligation to yourself. Because our individual salvation depends on collective salvation. Because thinking only about yourself, fulfilling your immediate wants and needs, betrays a poverty of ambition. Because it's only when you hitch your wagon to something larger than yourself that you realize your true potential and discover the role you'll play in writing the next great chapter in America's story.*

The similarity between Obama's and McCain's thinking is more than a little striking. But there's an extra element to Obama's vision. Whereas McCain sees service as a route to full citizenship, Obama also sees it as a means to achieve political change.

Consider, for instance, his idea of creating a kind of national service craigslist—an online network where Americans could match their own skills and time commitments with available service opportunities, and even rate those opportunities for other would-be volunteers to see. "This will empower more Americans to craft their own service agenda," he announced last December, "and make their own change from the bottom up."

This notion of a web-based, self-organized national service effort might seem a bit dreamy—except that it's based on the same organizational model Obama used to win the Democratic nomination. Indeed, in his speech last December, he made explicit the connection between his vision of, and commitment to, national service, and the political transformation he is trying to engineer:

> *I have no doubt that in the face of impossible odds people who love their country can change it. But I hold no illusions that one man or woman can do this alone. That's why my campaign has called nearly 400,000 Americans to a common purpose. That's why I'm reaching out to Democrats, and also to Independents and Republicans. And that is why I won't just ask for your vote as a candidate; I will ask for your service and your active citizenship when I am President of the United States. This will not be a call issued in one speech or program; this will be a cause of my presidency.*

Whether Obama really will make national service a cause of his presidency remains to be seen. But if he does, it could define his administration the way the Peace Corps defined JFK's. At the very least, he's talking seriously about national service. That's more than can be said for McCain. WM

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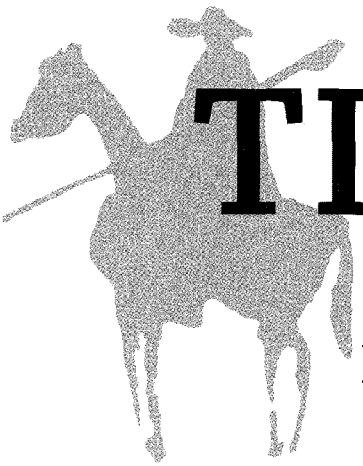

TILTING *at windmills*

By Charles Peters

What worries me about Obama I

Why didn't Barack Obama mention the military option in his otherwise eloquent call to service at Wesleyan? Why didn't he show respect for the people of West Virginia and Kentucky by doing more than token campaigning there? These are troubling questions for an Obama supporter like me. I hate to contemplate the reaction of those less sympathetic to his cause. His San Francisco side could still cost him the election.

What worries me about Obama II

To Hillary's credit, it must be said that she won most of the debates on style, if not on substance. Her presentation was more vigorous and fluent than Obama's, whose victories on substance were often weakened by too many 'uh's' and too little energy. He should have learned to do better after twenty debates, and be eager to challenge McCain to a debate. What he should insist on is freedom from network showoffs as interrogators, and on questions being asked by the candidates of one another. Because Obama and McCain need to appeal to moderates, this would ensure both would want to seem fair in their questioning.

Department of pure coincidence

Who arranged the National Press Club appearance by Reverend Wright that became such a headache for Barack Obama? Was it a matter of chance, or was there mischief afoot? Errol Louis of the *New York Daily News* was sufficiently curious to discover the answer. It was Barbara Reynolds, who used to work for *USA Today*, is an ordained minister, and runs the Reynolds News Service. She was also, notes Louis, an "enthusiastic Hillary Clinton supporter."

Aural sex appeal

Do you find it increasingly difficult to make yourself heard in restaurants? We have friends who like to discover the hottest, hippest new places to dine. Having entered the evening looking forward to good conversation with old pals, we find ourselves unable to make out more than a word or two of what our friends are saying.

> It seems that restaurant owners believe that loud music makes customers feel young and lively, a kind of aural Viagra.

The effect is just like watching the moving lips of actors in the old silent films—only in this case, not accompanied by silence, but by deafening noise.

I am indebted to Tom Sietsema of the *Washington Post Magazine* for letting me in on the secret behind this miserable phenomenon: It seems that restaurant owners believe that loud music makes customers feel young and lively, a kind of aural Viagra. Actually, all it does for me is make me feel old and deaf.

Obama: doing it right

My son Chris is both an evangelical and a fervent Obama fan. He thinks Obama can gain a significant share of the evangelical vote if he overcomes the liberal distaste for wearing religion on one's sleeve and instead reaches out to the right people and uses the right words. Not so incidentally, repeatedly declaring his Christian faith would also reassure those who think he is a Muslim. Obama showed he understands the right people point by inviting to a post-nomination-clinching meeting the evangelicals who are most likely to sympathize with his cause, and are least afraid of the right-wing lunatics in the evangelical movement. As for the right words, Obama began his Father's Day's address at the Apostolic Church of God, "You are blessed to worship in a house built on the rock of *Jesus Christ*, our Lord and *Savior*." My son says those words, used together, signal to evangelicals that you share the essence of their faith.

Cotton Mather would be proud

We may not have the Salem witch trials today, but federal prosecutors in the District of Columbia are trying hard to rise to the challenge. In the course of prosecuting a local madam, they have managed to wreck the lives of several of her former sex workers who had subsequently gone

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straight. One had become an officer in the U.S. Navy. Another had earned her Ph.D. and is now a sixty-three-year-old retiree.

The prosecutors should be named, because they belong in some hall of infamy for obsessive inquisitors. They are Daniel Butler and Catherine Connelly.

Here is a sampling of the questions that they found appropriate, according to Dana Milbank of the *Washington Post*:

Butler asked the Navy officer about her experience with one client: "What happened?"

Officer: "Sex."

Butler: "What type of sex?"

Officer: "Sometimes it was oral sex, usually it was normal."

Butler: "What's normal sex?"

After a few more questions like that, even the judge had had enough, and he excused the officer. The judge must have felt guilty because, when the officer later returned to the stand, she was so obviously stricken that the judge said, "Take two deep breaths and relax," and then assured her, "Everything is going to be okay."

He should tell that to the Navy, which has already removed her from her post.

As for prosecutor Connelly, here's what she regarded as an acceptable line of questioning for the sixty-three-year-old:

Connelly: "What happened when you went in the shower?"

Sixty-three-year-old: "I was having sex."

Connelly: "What would happen if you were menstruating?"

I used to be a lawyer, and speculated about what the relevance could possibly have been for that question. The answer is: none.

The trial has already led to two suicides: the alleged madam, Deborah Jane Palfrey, who had been sentenced to four to six years in prison; and a former employee, who hanged herself before the trial. The prosecutors will be lucky if there are not more suicides by the women whose lives they have ruined. By the way, none of the prominent male customers, like Senator David Vitter, were required to testify.

> We may not have the Salem witch trials today, but federal prosecutors in the District of Columbia are trying hard to rise to the challenge.

Obama: doing it wrong

Last December, Paul Tewes, Obama's Iowa state campaign director, started to give him a detailed briefing on how the campaign was going. Obama waved him off, saying "I trust you and you know what you're doing," according to a June article on Obama's managerial style in the *New York Times*. Obama may have thought he was showing faith in his staff by not micromanaging. And perhaps his campaign staff is so great that he is justified. But when he starts managing the federal government, he'll find a bureaucracy that is less than uniformly excellent and that is gifted at filtering out the bad news as reports travel up the ladder to the White House. He should follow FDR's example and never miss an opportunity to learn from workers down the line what is really happening with the federal programs for which a president is responsible.

The never-ending story

It is no accident that in the week before the Texas and Ohio primaries, when it appeared that Obama might have the nomination locked up, the press was filled with stories casting doubt on him. Indeed, the same thing happened the week before the Pennsylvania primary. If you want to understand the motivation behind this coverage, one of Billy Wilder's less celebrated masterpieces, *Ace in the Hole*, explained how a reporter will do anything to keep a good story like the Obama-Clinton contest alive.

In the movie, Kirk Douglas plays the reporter who discovers a miner trapped deep in a mine. Although he knows how to rescue him immediately, he realizes he can milk the poor miner's plight for story after story. So he keeps this knowledge to himself, prolonging the story for weeks, and becoming famous for his breathless Anderson Cooper-like reports from the scene.

Keep those goalposts moving

Another indication of the media's strong unconscious desire to keep the race going: Up until the week before the Pennsylvania primary, the conventional wisdom was that Clinton had to win by a double-digit margin to retain credibility as a candidate. But as election day neared, and polls predicted a single-digit margin, Chris Matthews reduced his estimate to 8 percent; MSNBC's Chuck Todd to 7 percent; and the *Washington Post*'s Dan Balz decided 5 percent would be good enough.

I noticed, however, that the passion to keep the race going seemed to fade after Oregon, and wondered why. Then I had dinner a week or so later with a prominent Washington journalist. He and his wife were scheduled to leave for a European vacation in a few days. Of course, I realized, many Washington reporters and their families have vacations planned for the summer and didn't want to be stuck covering a continuing contest between Clinton and Obama.

Now look what you've done

As you see the price of oil rise to unprecedented heights, recall the wisdom of all your friends who have raved about the virtues of deregulation and free markets. Their views have largely prevailed for three decades. One result, reports the *Washington Post's* David Cho, is that the Commodity Futures Trading Commission staff now stands at "its lowest levels in the agency's 33-year history."

The CFTC happens to be the agency that regulates the trading in oil futures, which is exactly where all the speculation is occurring. Big banks and hedge funds have been exempt from rules that limit speculation. Isn't this the same kind of regulatory laxity that got us in the housing mess?

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General answers

When Senator Richard Lugar asked General Petraeus "whether the administration has a definable political strategy that recognizes the time limits we face and seeks a realistic outcome designed to protect America's vital interests," the general responded, "We've got to continue. We have our teeth into the jugular and we need to keep it there." The *Washington Post*'s David Broder, who understandably felt that this was less than a full response, asked Petraeus to try again. This time Petraeus told him, "There has to be a regional approach." When Senator Obama asked how they would determine when we had been successful enough to leave, he was greeted by similar obfuscations. It seems Petraeus and the administration have no real idea what their goal is.

Marx redux

A few months ago I discussed the self pity of those making $100,000 to $250,000, who seem to regard themselves as the New Proletariat. It now appears they have their own Karl Marx, ABC's Charles Gibson, who in two different debates expressed great concern that Democrats might raise taxes on this group. By contrast, he seemed totally indifferent to the plight of those making under $100,000, who strike me and Senator Obama as more deserving of concern.

Although Obama brought up his plan to help the lower income group by reducing the burden of the payroll tax on those earning under $70,000, Gibson ignored him in his eagerness to pin Obama down on not raising taxes on the New Proletariat.

Das capital gains

Gibson's crusade against taxes on the affluent does not stop there. He also expressed concern that Democrats might raise the capital gains tax, and implied that one-hundred million Americans would be hurt. Of course, the great bulk of the burden of the capital gains tax is not on average Americans, but on rich people.

Gibson also repeatedly asserted that cutting the capital gains tax produces increased revenue. Of course it does—for a little while. After a rate reduction, people are more likely to sell their stocks because of the lower tax. But the effect rarely lasts beyond eighteen months.

The tax Gibson should worry about

My suggestion to Charles Gibson is that he look into the payroll tax. Obama, with his disconcerting gift for using fancy words when they do not serve clarity, called the payroll tax "regressive." He should have made clear that, unlike the income tax, which gets higher as incomes go up, the payroll tax stops dead at $102,000, and it falls hardest on working people. For those making under $80,000, it is the largest tax they pay. Why not worry about them, Charlie, instead of the New Proletariat and Wall Street?

Gibson should also have known that reducing the payroll tax on working people would stimulate the economy by providing new jobs. As the head of an enterprise that barely kept its head above water for thirty-two years—and innumerable other businesses are in similarly precarious shape today—I know what a deterrent the payroll tax, which both employer and employee pay, is to hiring. When you need a new worker and would otherwise hire immediately, you think of the payroll tax and decide not to do anything.

If Gibson had only showed he understood all this during the two debates he moderated, working-class voters would realize that Obama is the only candidate who would reduce their greatest tax burden. And Gibson is not alone in the media in his ignorance of the payroll tax issue. On May 29, the *Washington Post*'s Perry Bacon Jr. had a front-page story headlined, "On Policy, Obama Breaks Little New Ground." He does not mention the payroll tax and says that Obama's tax policies "differ little" from Clinton's.

As for the rest of my journalistic colleagues, I'm afraid that only a handful of the campaign stories I've read have shown the faintest understanding of the payroll tax issue. Journalists accuse Obama of elitism, but their ignorance of the payroll tax demonstrates that they are the real elitists.

That's real money, honey

If Charles Gibson is the New Proletariat's Karl Marx, CNBC's Maria Bartiromo is its Rosa Luxemburg. She worries about the impact of Obama's plan to increase taxes on those with incomes over $200,000: "That's not rich. So it's actually going to impact more people than you think." This probably comes as news to Bartiromo, but exactly 3.2 percent of taxpayers have taxable income more than $200,000.

Bartiromo, aka the "Money Honey," also frets than "when people sell anything, like a home, 30 percent of the profit will go to the government." She seems not to know that when a couple sells a home, $500,000 of their gain is not taxed. How many of us have homes that in today's market are at the slightest risk of burdening us with a profit of more than $500,000?

When watchdogs watch

If you need an illustration of the importance of the media's role as government watchdog, all you have to do is look at the impact of the recent outbreak of stories revealing inept regulation at the Federal Aviation Administration and Consumer Product Safety Commission. The result is that in March Matthew L. Wald and Micheline Maynard of the *New York Times* have written about the "pendulum swing" from easy to tough regulation at the FAA. And Annys Shin of the *Washington Post* described how the "CPSC revived after years of decay."

Needless to say, both agencies have a long way to go. But the prognosis is far better today than it was before all those stories were written.

What recession?

Christine Haughney and former *Monthly* intern Eric Koningsberg recently told readers of the *New York Times*, "Despite Tough Times, Ultrarich Keep Spending." I had guessed as much a few weeks ago, when I spotted a jewelry dealer's ad with this headline: "I need your diamonds and jewels," followed by, "Right now demand for diamonds is at an all time high."

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As your boss, I suggest you award that contract to Steve

What Southwest Airlines did in hiring a former FAA employee to ensure tender treatment by his former government agency has been perfected into a high art by defense contractors who have long dangled the possibility of lucrative future employment before Pentagon officials in order to secure contracts. In the most recent example to emerge, Strategic Message Solutions not only was headed by a pal of several Air Force officers, it hired a retired general, Hal Hornburg. The result: When the winner of the more than $1 million dollar contract was decided by a group of seven officers, they were assembled by Major General Stephen Goldfein, who outranked them all, and told them: "I don't pick the winner, but if I did, I'd pick SMS."

Unsurprisingly, the seven lower ranking officers agreed with the general. As a consequence, in the words of the *Washington Post's* Josh White, "A controversial $50 million contract was awarded to a company that barely existed to reward a recently retired four-star general" and a pal of several Air Force officers.

Scrap the CIA

If the Pentagon is not enough to worry about, ponder our intelligence agencies. Together the FBI, CIA, NSA, and other associated minor entities have about 100,000 employees. A survey conducted by the Director of National Intelligence and reported by the *Washington Post's* Stephen Barr found that only 28 percent think their bosses take steps to deal with colleagues who slack off at work.

The fact is that there are too many intelligence employees who aren't doing their jobs, not learning languages like Arabic and Chinese, and resisting real spying jobs in favor of safe assignments inside embassies or back at HQ in Langley. Recall the Karachi station chief who, at the beginning of the hunt for Osama in 2001, was spending half his time at his farm in Virginia.

Indeed, the *Post's* David Ignatius, whom I rank among the top two or three reporters in the know about the intelligence agencies, wrote "when the next president thinks about fixing the CIA, he or she ought to consider the radical thought that it's time to blow up the CIA and start over."

Ignatius doesn't mean getting rid of all present employees—some are terrific—but the agency needs to get rid of the slackers and of a culture that in so many ways encourages the wrong behaviors. The June Senate report shows that the bad intelligence that led to the Iraq war, though certainly partly the fault of Bush and Cheney, was also the result of failures by the CIA. You don't have to know much about that agency to realize that its errors were largely attributable to a shortage of bureaucratic bravery, both about serving as real spies in the field and about standing up to their bosses.

> Obama should have learned to do better after twenty debates with Hillary, and he should be eager to challenge McCain to a real debate without network show-offs.

I prefer your reporting on the CIA

On another matter, David Ignatius showed himself to be less well-informed, when he criticized Obama for his association with Tony Rezko. His column did not contain one word to even hint that Obama had performed a single wrongful public act because of this association. This is the same kind of journalism that condemns Obama for his association with Wright without giving any evidence that Obama agrees with any of Wright's outrageous assertions.

Fundamental restructuring for thee...

The International Monetary Fund's lending decreased 86 percent over the last five years. In that same period, the IMF found it necessary to retain all but 13 percent of its staff. This illustrates an important point about bureaucracies. As they age, they tend to become more interested in the preservation of their staff than in the performance of their mission.

Heckuva job, Gordon

If you wonder whether George W. Bush has retained the gift for selecting government officials that he demonstrated when he hired "you're doing a heckuva job, Brownie," consider his Undersecretary of Defense, Gordon Englund. (To understand what follows, you need to know that the Department of Energy pays the lion's share of the cost of nuclear weapons development, even though the Defense Department pretty much determines the amount that needs to be spent.)

Recently Englund testified before the Energy Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, whose ranking minority member, David Hobson, observed, "I heard some complaints that Defense asks for the pie-in-the-sky sometimes because they don't have to pay for it; it doesn't come out of your budget, so ask for everything."

Hobson then asked Englund: "Do you think this current arrangement makes sense?"

Englund replied: "Mr Hobson, I guess I was not aware that we were not paying for these programs."

Doctored

"Citing ethics, some doctors are rejecting industry pay," is the headline of a recent article by Gina Kolata in the *New York Times*. The word "some" was used advisedly, as the first sentence makes clear, by referring to the "small number" of physicians involved.

The great scandal of American medicine is the large number of doctors who take payoffs from manufacturers of phar-

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maceuticals and medical devices and the number of respected medical journals whose integrity has been compromised by publishing the results of industry-subsidized studies.

The latest example is provided by the prestigious physicians who allowed Merck to use their names as authors of studies actually done by Merck employees to demonstrate the potency and safety of Vioxx. In other words, the studies were not just paid for by Merck, they were performed by Merck.

One study by nine Merck staffers was found in the files with a notation, "external author?"—meaning they were looking for another corrupt physician ready to sell his name.

The magic speech

If Reverend Wright's "God damn America," Michelle's "the first time in my adult lifetime I'm really proud of my country," and the flag-pin issue have raised doubt about Obama's patriotism, I have a suggestion for him. It is to recall the day he gave the speech in Iowa in which he got the audience so fired up about the potential of this country to come together that they started chanting, "USA, USA,"—and give that speech again and again.

Wright on Moyers

After watching the Reverend Jeremiah Wright's appearance with Bill Moyers and their hour-long discussion of Wright's life, religion and values, I called Bill to congratulate him for letting the public see how thoughtful Wright had been. I then called several friends who had missed the show to tell them how impressive Wright could be. They must have thought I was demented when they saw Wright's performance at the National Press Club the following Monday morning. Over the following month, I searched the media for reports of the Moyers' show, and found only snippets that failed to suggest the impression Wright had made.

That disturbs me. It disturbs me because all the American people have seen of Wright is his crazy side. They have no idea why Obama would have respected him for so long and would not be able to understand why Obama had not "distanced himself" earlier.

I got a foreboding of the disaster the press might be creating when I read Dana Milbank's report of a Pennsylvania voter who said of Obama: "I think he just wants to be president because he's black."

How to operate with the operators

Jim Johnson is a charming man. Curiously, the only time I met him was when we shared a table with Vernon Jordan. As I chatted to him, I thought, "My God, he's even smoother than Vernon."

Washington is full of skilled operators, though these two are a little smoother than most. Many see themselves as devoted to the public interest, and more than a few really are. But there is one exception that Barack Obama should understand: their devotion to the public interest ends when it conflicts with the interests of their clients.

A wise president will certainly use operators like these if he wants to be effective. But he has to be very careful to look at the background of each in terms of his fitness for the particular assignment. In Johnson's case, Obama clearly failed to do this. It would have been fine to have Johnson as a member of his vice presidential search committee. But the symbolism of him as the head of the committee was painfully wrong. Johnson should have been disqualified by his history with Fannie Mae and his participation in the back-scratching clique of CEOs and board members who take care of one another with lavish compensation.

They all laughed...

Gregg Easterbrook warns, in the cover story of the June *Atlantic*, that the Earth could be struck by an asteroid capable of causing catastrophic damage, and NASA is doing almost nothing to prevent this potential calamity. Although he makes a persuasive case, my first reaction was, "We've already got enough other dangers to worry about." Then I remembered an article Easterbrook wrote for the *Monthly* in 1980 in which he told astronauts that if a booster rocket failed, "You'd die." His warning was ignored by NASA, with the result being the Challenger disaster.

By stop-loss, we don't mean loss of life

The Army's suicide rate, reports the Associated Press, is now the "highest it has ever been." If you want to understand why, I suggest you look at the Army's cruel policy of sending soldiers back to Iraq for repeated tours, and most especially its "stop-loss" program. This policy permits the Army to compel soldiers to remain in the service even though their enlistment has expired. The poor soldier who had signed up for four years and served his time, been shot at in Iraq and thinks he is now safe, is told he must stay in the Army and return to Iraq once more. This happened to Sergeant David White, who told NBC's Jim Miklaszewski, "I was just in disbelief. I didn't think something like that could ever happen to me."

But happen it did. Another stop-loss victim was shipped back to Iraq, where seven months later a roadside bomb "severed my hand almost completely off."

They were far from the only victims of this policy. Fifty-eight thousand other soldiers have suffered the same fate, and many have been wounded or, even worse, killed.

Thus, it is not surprising to learn from *Time*'s excellent Pentagon reporter Mark Thompson that in order to endure the stress of continuing service in Iraq, "a sizeable and growing number of U.S. combat troops are taking daily doses of antidepressants" prescribed by Army doctors. Compelling them to stay, keeping them doped up until they are so maimed that they can't continue fighting, and denying them decent veteran's benefits because that might tempt them to even consider leaving the Army—this is the Bush-McCain policy, and it is shameful. WM

Charles Peters is the founding editor of the *Washington Monthly*.

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$50,000 award

for preventive journalism

As we mourn the fifth anniversary of the war in Iraq, the question begs: *How could we have averted this tragic folly?* As a journalist, I have naturally thought about what our profession could have done. It seems clear to me that an enterprising reporter could have discovered that the (alleged) evidence of WMD was manufactured, out of date, or relied on extremely dubious sources like the aptly named "Curveball."

I ask myself why we seem to find out what's wrong only when a disaster has happened. After the coal mine explodes, we learn that proper safety procedures weren't being followed. And only after a Hurricane Katrina do we learn how unprepared we were for a natural disaster. To encourage the media to find out in time instead of too late, the foundation I head, Understanding Government, is offering a $50,000 award for preventative journalism, for the best article that identifies inept leaders, misguided policies, and bureaucratic bungling in time to prevent another disaster.

— *Charles Peters*

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE AWARD, CONSULT OUR WEB SITE, WWW.UNDERSTANDINGGOV.ORG

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"... such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) ... [shall] become the Seat of the Government of the United States"
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

BHO: QED

Why Obama is scientifically certain to win in November.

By John Balz

If you spend time among the chattering classes, it's easy to get caught up in Campaign '08's most tantalizing questions. Has the length and tenor of the primary campaign irreparably split the Democratic Party in half? Could the Jeremiah Wright videos hurt Barack Obama more in the general election than they did in the primary? Might improvements on the ground in Iraq make John McCain's support for the war less of a problem with voters and burnish his image as a leader on national security? Well, sure, all these things could happen. But the disinterested, square students of politics, otherwise known as political scientists, find this kind of distress silly. That's because Obama will win this fall. Period. As a political scientist, I'll stake the reputation of my profession on it. Maybe some money, too.

Over the past few decades, political scientists have come up with increasingly elaborate statistical models for predicting presidential election outcomes. The basic idea is that voters evaluate presidents largely on the basis of how the economy has fared under them. That extends to potential successors in the same party. As such, McCain basically inherits Bush's record and Obama inherits Clinton's record. These statistical models have also gotten quite accurate in their presidential forecasting. In 2004, during a very close race, eleven out of twelve studies correctly predicted a Bush win.

So why is Obama certain to prevail? Much of it boils down to what you've already heard in the press: what political scientists call the fundamentals—primarily presidential approval, the state of the economy, and incumbency—are indisputably in the Democrats' favor this year. And don't be deceived by fluctuating poll numbers, either. At this time in 1988, George H.W. Bush was solidly trailing Michael Dukakis in Gallup polls. Likewise, at this time in 1992, George H.W. Bush was solidly leading Bill Clinton. Enough said.

While political science models differ from one another in the variables they take into account and in how they weigh them, nearly all of the models are quantitative. That means they not only pick a winner—they also forecast what his or her margin of victory will be. So what are the models saying for 2008? Douglas Hibbs, who has been studying the relationship between voting and the economy since the 1970s, has predicted that the Republican candidate will win only 46.7 percent of the vote. (That means the Democrat would win 53.3 percent of the vote, since these models assume only a two-party race.) In two different models, Michael Lewis-Beck and Charles Tien of Iowa, while using quite generous assumptions for Bush's presidential popularity (35 percent) and GNP growth (3 percent annual), still predict either a narrow Republican defeat (with McCain winning 48.5 percent of the vote) or else a far more resounding one, with McCain winning only 41.4 percent. Alan Abramowitz of Emory, assuming 2 percent economic growth for the first half of the year and a 30 percent difference between the president's approval and disapproval numbers, estimates that McCain's vote total will be just under 44 percent. Ray Fair, a Yale economist, puts McCain's total at 47.8 percent. And the outlier in this crowd, Helmut

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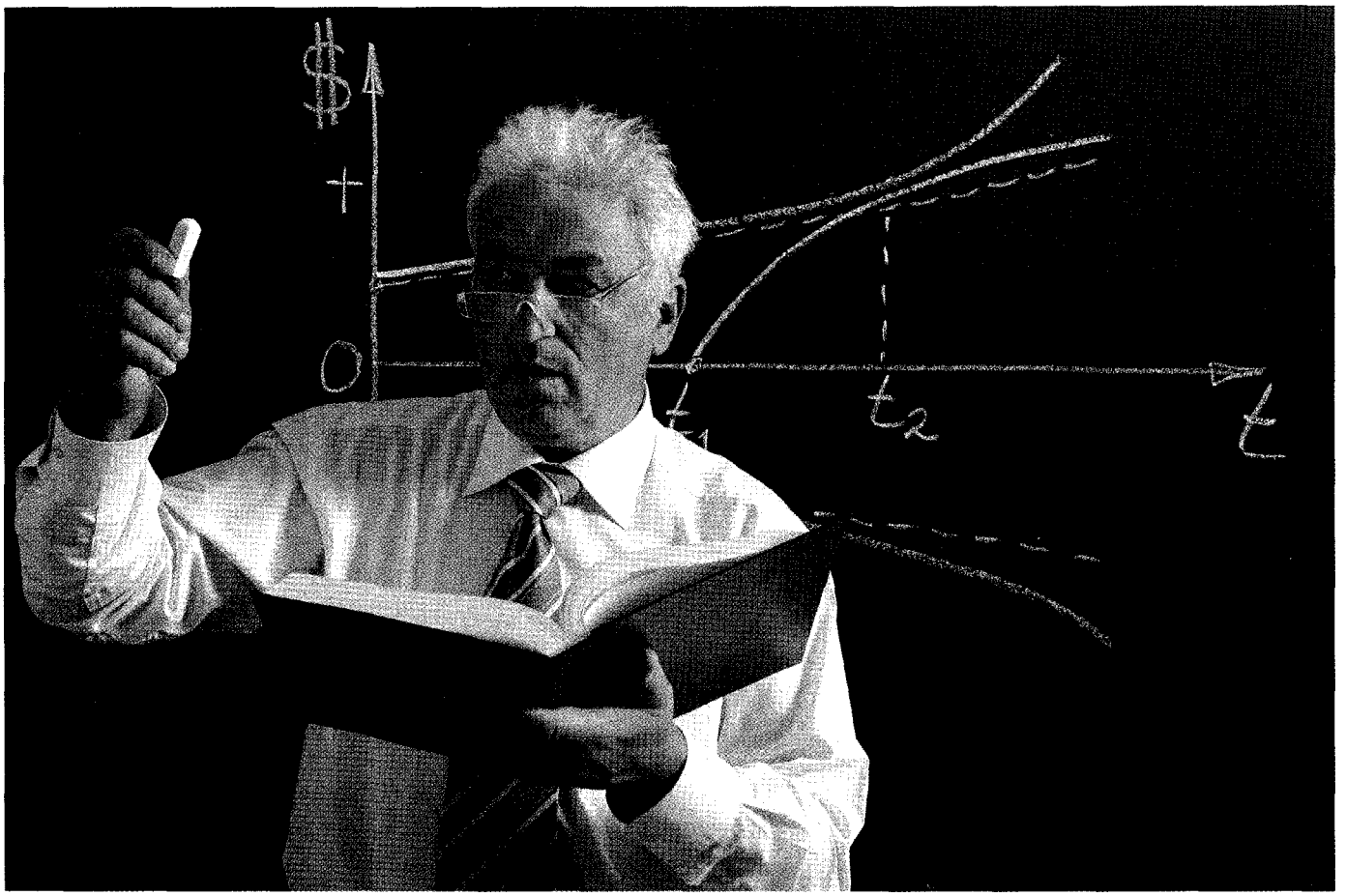

Viorika Prikhodko/Istockphoto

Norpoth of SUNY at Stonybrook, has said that the Democratic candidate would beat McCain by only a single percentage point or less—still far from encouraging as a best-case scenario for the GOP.

So, then, if it's already been proven scientifically to be a Democratic year no matter what, why even bother to have a campaign? Or an election? Why not just hand the White House over to Obama right away? Well, here's the catch. First of all, political science isn't saying that if the election were held *today* the Democratic candidate would win. The models assume a November election. Nor are political scientists saying that Obama could win without campaigning. Indeed, their models assume that both sides will campaign. Rather, what they're saying is that the function of the campaigns will merely be to awaken the latent preferences already existing within voters. Sure, bulging campaign coffers and sky-high IQs are important assets, but they're unlikely to be significantly disparate between the two campaigns. Political scientists therefore tend to view them as a wash. (And, yes, this does tend to make us boring Beltway dinner guests.) Think of campaigning as irrigating a field in which the seeds are already planted and the weather isn't too crazy. You can't change the crop, but you do need to add the water.

And what about the worry *du jour*, the supposed split in the Democratic coalition? Again, take it from a political scientist. Don't sweat it. Democrats will come home. John Sides of George Washington has shown that loyalty has been on the rise since the early 1970s, when only about 60 percent of Democrats voted for the Democratic nominee. Today—and since the 1990s—it's been closer to 90 percent. Sides has also dismissed the party's great education divide—college versus no college. It's "at times non-existent and, when it exists, has not 'widened' over time." More than 80 percent of Democrats with or without college degrees have supported the Democratic presidential candidate in the general election since 1988, and that number has been closer to 90 percent over the past decade. Bitter as Hillary's supporters have been, they're not going to make a meaningful dent in this trend.

Now, you may still think I'm being overly confident in my soothsaying. And I'll concede it's a strange year. For the first time since 1952, the incumbent party's candidate is neither a president nor vice president. In theory, just as Bill Clinton's strong economic record did not rub off on Al Gore, George Bush's foreign policy errors will not rub off on John McCain. But I seriously doubt it. My friends, as John McCain might say, the die is cast. As long as Democratic donors write checks, the Obama ground team performs in November as it did in February, and (let us pray) the country avoids a major terrorist attack, the story of 2008 will end happily for Democrats and for the reputation of political science. And at this point, with all the bets I plan to make, it's the only outcome I can afford. WM

John Balz is a political science graduate student at the University of Chicago.

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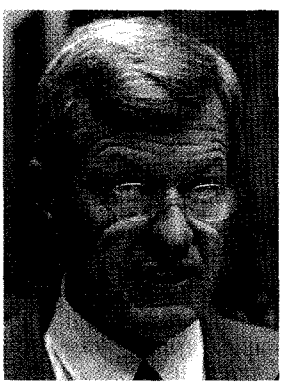
by Avi Klein

How to be a Montana millionaire

Montana's state motto may be *oro y plata* (gold and silver), but it's not a good place to get rich. In the rankings of millionaires per state, Montana beats only four other states, with a mere 22.9 millionaires for every thousand households, plus a solitary billionaire. But we'll let you in on a secret: if you live in Montana and want to get not just comfortable, but really, really rich, you might consider working for your senior Democratic senator, Max Baucus.

Between 1996 and 2008, the *Missoulian* recently reported, 20 percent of Baucus's staffers have gone into lobbying. That makes him the fourth biggest funnel into K Street among all senators, and second only to Ted Kennedy among Democrats. Records show some of these staffers making millions of dollars a year, often by lobbying on issues before Baucus's Finance Committee. Jeff Forbes, Baucus's chief of staff with responsibility for the Medicare drug bill portfolio, showed exquisite timing when he quit his position in 2003 five days before the final vote. Weeks later, he was a lobbyist for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA). It was a good deal for PhRMA, which saved millions from a bill that prevented the federal government from negotiating drug prices, and a great deal for Forbes, who traded a $140,000 federal salary for $5.4 million (so far) in lobbying income. Meanwhile, another PhRMA executive moved in the opposite direction: in 2005, PhRMA vice president Michelle Easton took an attorney position on the Finance Committee.



Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT)

The revolving door has been good to Baucus. Despite his thirty years in the Senate, he was a bit of a wallflower until he became the ranking member of the Finance Committee in 2000. Since then, PhRMA and other health care lobbies have given Baucus more than $700,000. A survey by Public Citizen found that Baucus matched only Bill Frist in the amount of special interest money he'd received. He's also set records for how much money he's raised out of state: 91.4 percent, the most of any senator. As Baucus has grown in corporate popularity, so has his enthusiasm for fundraising. "We've never gotten such an aggressive pitch from a senator," said two lobbyists after being urged to pony up $100,000 each for Baucus's 2008 reelection campaign.

These close ties to industry have infuriated Baucus's Democratic colleagues, who see his support of Bush's tax cuts, the Medicare drug bill, and the 2005 bankruptcy bill as proof that Baucus is more committed to reelection than his party's goals. A more charitable interpretation comes from Pat Williams, a former Democratic Montana congressman. "He's simply bombarded by special interests trying to persuade him," Williams told the *Nation*. "He's like a tin plate on the ocean being pulled this way and that."

Poor guy. Baucus may be made of tin, but it's his former staffers who end up with all the *oro y plata*.

Just the facts, NAM

What with oil prices high, jobs moving overseas, and the American consumer tightening the purse strings, things are tough all over for the manufacturing sector. Normally lobbyists for manufacturers are immune to such downturns, but these days they're having problems of their own. In April, the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. upheld one of the most important elements of the post-Abramoff lobbying reforms—rules that require trade associations to disclose the names of major corporate donors who contribute to their lobbying efforts. The suit was brought by the National Association of Manufacturers, and if NAM is to be believed, the ruling left corporations around the country struggling to fulfill their noble First Amendment aspirations.

The rules were intended to bring transparency to what critics call "stealth coalitions." NAM, for instance, represents fourteen thousand companies, but when the group launches advertisements or lobbies on Capital Hill, the names of the companies involved remain private. As NAM quite willingly admits, the old law gave corporate interests cover from consumer advocates who might destroy a company's carefully groomed image by publicizing efforts that, say, polluted the environment or otherwise harmed the public interest. Forcing the group to name its most active members, NAM gravely informed the court, could result in "boycotts, shareholder suits," even "mob violence." And, horrors, NAM added, "experience has shown that publicly linking a NAM member to the association's lobbying activities often results in legislators and other groups with policy-influencing ability making demands for contributions." The end result, NAM claimed, would be fewer corporations taking part in lobbying activity of any kind.

Needless to say, the court found that a lobbying group's interest in not being shaken down for donations is not a compelling constitutional issue. But NAM isn't giving up without a fight. A review by the *Politico* of one NAM-affiliated front group, the Alliance for Energy and Economic Growth, found its attempt at disclosure so murky that it took two hours and the assistance of the group's attorney to locate the appropriate forms online, and even then it was hard to sort out its membership. That's fitting with NAM's general approach to disclosure. "We won't be sending these forms out to reporters," said NAM spokesman Hank Cox, unprompted. "If they want them they'll have to go down to the Secretary of the Senate's office." Presumably, the rampaging mobs will have to do the same. WM

Avi Klein is a frequent contributor to the *Washington Monthly*.

Mark Wilson/Getty Images

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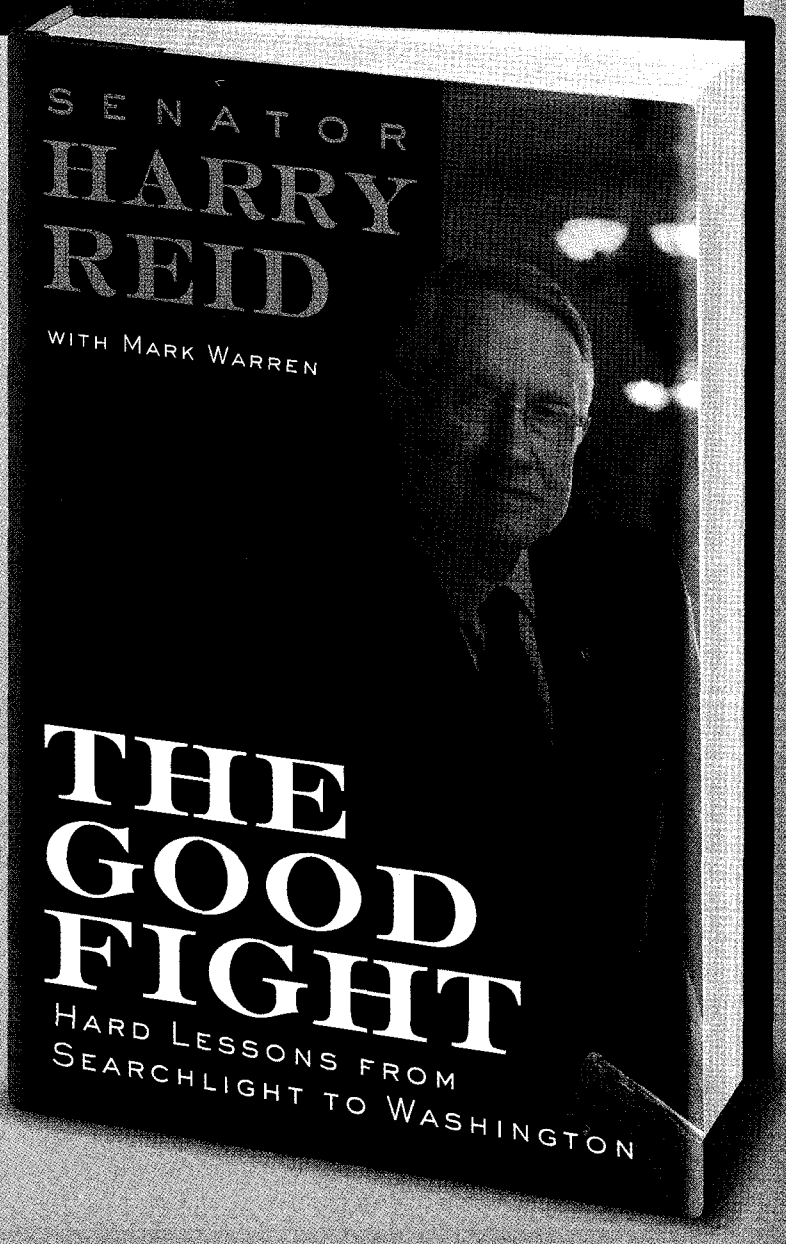
SENATOR HARRY REID:

DEEPLY PASSIONATE UNCOMMONLY BLUNT

On Washington, Congress, Bush, America, and his extraordinary journey from Searchlight, Nevada — **the most remarkable book of this election year.**



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ICE storm: Latino groups protest factory raids by immigration agents in California.

David McNew/Getty Images

Pinkertons at DHS

Are immigration busts undermining U.S. labor law?

By T.A. Frank

In November 2005, hotel employees in the city of Emeryville, California got some good news. Local voters had passed a "living wage" law requiring hotels to pay workers a minimum of nine dollars per hour plus extra for certain duties. In an expensive town—Emeryville occupies a narrow peninsula in the San Francisco Bay, making it attractive to tourists—this was welcome news. As the months went by, however, employees at one hotel, the Woodfin Suites, found that they were still being paid less than the law required. In September 2006 they went before the city council to complain about it.

Then things got ugly. A few weeks after the city council meeting, managers at the Woodfin told employees that their Social Security numbers had generated "no-match" results—meaning that the numbers were probably fraudulent. The employees would have a month to fix the trouble or be dismissed. Since some of the employees had already been there for six years on flimsy paperwork, the sudden request seemed like revenge on the part of the hotel. Soon, the two sides went to court in a complicated case involving the interplay of back wages and immigration law.

As the fight worked its way through the legal system, however, something else was going on behind the scenes.

When done wrong, crackdowns on immigrant workers do nothing but help bad employers.

Woodfin's CEO, Samuel Hardage, decided to contact his congressman, Republican Brian Bilbray of San Diego, a noted immigration hawk, to ask for some help. Would Bilbray kindly intervene with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, aka ICE?

Bilbray, who had received campaign backing from Hardage, obliged. On February 21, 2007, the congressman sent a

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letter to the head of ICE, Julie Myers, asking her to investigate the legal status of employees of Woodfin and other businesses in Emeryville. Later that year, ICE followed up, questioning one of the fired Woodfin workers at home and arresting an employee at a neighboring Emeryville hotel. As ICE busts go, this one was mild. Still, if Hardage's intention had been to send a warning to illegal immigrants everywhere about what happens to complainers, it had been effective.

The Woodfin case generated a minor stir in the Bay area, but the episode was typical of a common problem: when immigration enforcement and worker protection come into conflict with each other, they make a mess. That's because one usually comes at the expense of the other.

Consider these examples: In Tar Heel, North Carolina, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union was trying to organize workers at a Smithfield Foods slaughterhouse. Then, in January 2007, the effort was effectively halted when ICE raided the plant and arrested twenty-one employees on suspicion of being illegal immigrants. In Portland, Oregon, Del Monte Fresh Foods had settled a case in 2006 with workers who alleged they'd been fired for raising safety concerns at a plant. In 2007, ICE busted the same plant and arrested over 150 people. In Queens, New York, Teamsters were organizing employees at a FreshDirect food plant. Then, last December, just weeks before the workers were due to vote on union representation, ICE announced that it would be conducting an immigration audit of the company, thereby scuttling the unionization effort.

In fact, there's disturbing evidence to suggest that unscrupulous employers are leaning heavily on ICE to threaten their own employees. Some of the most damning statistics come from a 2004 report by Professor Michael Wishnie of Yale Law School. In a remarkable study of all workplace raids—184 in all—conducted by federal immigration enforcement in the New York City area over a thirty-month period, Wishnie found that over half were on workplaces officially embroiled in labor disputes.

In theory, ICE isn't supposed to brush up against labor enforcement. Its written policy is to avoid any role, even an inadvertent one, as union buster or company goon. This even extends to an agreement with the Department of Labor. In 1998, the Immigration and Nationalization Service (ICE's predecessor) and the Employment Standards Administration penned a "memorandum of understanding" pledging that the two agencies would "develop and implement policies ... that avoid inappropriate worksite interventions where it is known or reasonably suspected that a labor dispute is occurring." But the communication doesn't appear to be very strong these days.

No matter how you feel about illegal immigration, this is bad news for U.S. workers. Normally, when a factory breaks health and safety rules, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration finds out about the violations thanks to employee tips and subsequent interviews. Likewise, when a factory fails to pay minimum wage or overtime, inspectors from federal or state labor departments can normally depend on employee cooperation. If employees don't answer questions honestly, or if they run away the moment inspectors enter a building, then investigations go nowhere. And if labor officials are unable to enforce wage and safety standards properly, then law-abiding companies and legal workers suffer too, placed at an unfair disadvantage to rogue competitors.

But the damage goes beyond that. Illegal employees who fear deportation are far easier to exploit than legal ones who don't fear it. Owners can work illegal employees harder, subject them to more dangerous conditions, and pay them less money. So why not hire as many as possible? (To be sure, none of this would apply if employer sanctions for hiring illegal workers were heavy, but in reality they are light—and rarely imposed.) In this way, the so-called "job magnet," the main driver of illegal immigration, remains as powerful as ever. Perversely, then, the occasional ICE bust can make illegal workers even *more* appealing to employers than legal immigrants or American citizens.

Unfortunately, while ICE is aware of such concerns, it doesn't seem to be especially troubled by them. In the case of the Woodfin Hotel dispute, ICE released a statement saying, "The agency respects employees' rights to a safe and fair workplace; however, if ICE has evidence of criminal activity, a labor dispute does not preclude us from conducting an investigation." (Of course, since any case of illegal immigration is, strictly speaking, "criminal activity," this amounts to no reassurance at all.) Some episodes have been even more harmful. In August of 2005, for instance, ICE was involved in a crackdown on subcontractors working at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Employees there had been instructed to show up for mandatory safety session to be conducted by OSHA. Upon arriving at the appointed hour, however, the workers discovered that the OSHA instructors were in fact ICE agents in disguise and that the purpose of the gathering was an immigration bust. OSHA officials were horrified to think that their efforts to improve workplace safety might be viewed from now on as a front for immigration busts. So great was the resulting outcry that ICE officials vowed "new procedures to ensure that appropriate coordination is completed before future operations."

No matter how you feel about illegal immigration, this is bad news for U.S. workers.

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Exposés

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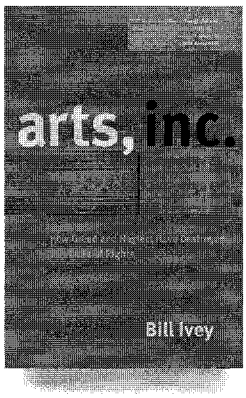
BY BILL IVEY



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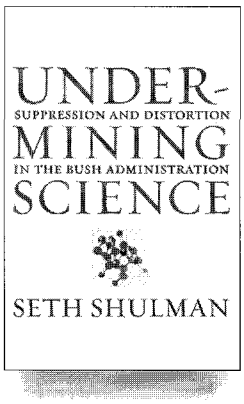

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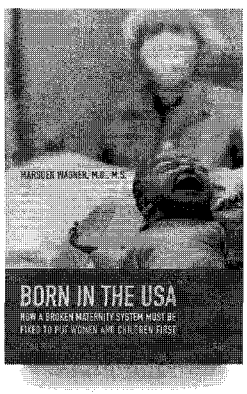

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Unfortunately, many foes of illegal immigration, especially those on the right, are reluctant to discourage ICE in any way. But they should think again. Done wrong, crackdowns do nothing but help bad employers. (After all, if lousy workplace conditions in the host country were a major deterrent to workers looking outside their native countries for employment, then Saudi Arabia, known to treat its foreign workers brutally, would lack a labor force.) Courts have, at times, been equally blind to the unintended consequences of loose-cannon immigration enforcement. In 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a five to four decision that a former employee of a company called Hoffman Plastics was not entitled to back pay because he had been in the country illegally. This was not a helpful decision. As Justice Stephen Breyer explained in his dissent, the majority ruling would have the effect of "encouraging [employers] to take risks, i.e., to hire with a wink and a nod those potentially unlawful aliens whose unlawful employment (given the Court's views) ultimately will lower the costs of labor law violations."

None of this is to say that ICE should cease all immigration enforcement. If we are to have controlled immigration in the United States, we must be prepared to live with its uncomfortable concomitant: the exclusion of those without permission to be here. With scarce resources, however, priorities have to make sense. Today, thousands of people cycle through our local criminal justice systems or are placed under arrest without being screened for their immigration status. As long as that's the case, how can ICE justify workplace busts—especially ones that step into labor disputes? Likewise, thousands of employers hire knowingly hire illegal immigrants and those few who get caught get off lightly for it. If employer punishment is mild, how does that discourage hiring illegal immigrants?

Partly to address such questions, ICE has vowed to get tough on employers. Still, when I contacted the agency to request data on all the raids conducted so far—and specifically on what sort of punishments had been meted out to employers—I was told that complete records were unavailable. Instead, I was referred to a few press releases about selected raids in which some especially shady employers had been arrested. So it comes down to trust in ICE. In a presidential administration not known for its planning or competence, you must have faith that ICE has surveyed the big picture and devised a thoughtful, comprehensive strategy of enforcement. With GOP donors in mind, you must have faith that the Bush administration is genuinely getting tough on employers, not just employees. And, at a time when worker protections have steadily eroded, you must have faith that ICE is taking care never to step into workplace disputes and undermine labor standards as it picks its targets. Well, then: are you feeling faithful? WM

T.A. Frank, an editor at the *Washington Monthly*, is an Irvine Fellow at the New America Foundation.

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Bin Laden's Soft Support

How the next president can win over the world's most alienated Muslims.

By Kenneth Ballen

On a typically humid spring night in Jakarta in 2005, an Indonesian colleague and I were driven by some Islamist activists through the city's dense back alleyways to the dilapidated offices of a leading radical student publication. We were led up a narrow flight of stairs and into a small room, crammed with young university students. Standing at the center of the room was a thin, bearded man in a skull cap and flowing white robes. He was an imam, a mentor to the students and a popular leader of the PKS, the leading Islamist party in Indonesia—the world's largest Muslim nation.

After a few polite introductory remarks, the imam launched into a litany of complaints all too familiar to my colleague and me, who conduct public opinion research in Muslim countries. America, said the imam, is at war with Islam. America is killing Muslims by the millions. (This number was apparently calculated by holding the United States responsible for every Muslim conflict casualty over the past several decades.) Islamic fighters are striking back with violence, the only language America understands. This was followed by the standard harangue against Jews, the secret but controlling force behind American perfidy. His young followers reacted with fervent delight.

The imam's work done, he departed for the evening. But we decided to stay. There's an Indonesian custom called *jagongan* which holds that the most important conversations occur by talking through the night, and on that evening, we discovered the potency of *jagongan* firsthand.

Initially, the students took up their leader's refrain. Osama bin Laden, they told us, was a hero because he gave up his worldly possessions to defend Muslim freedom and stand up to America. But he was not responsible, they insisted, for the attacks of 9/11, which were clearly the work of the CIA and the Israeli intelligence service—how else to explain the fact that there were no Jews in the World Trade Center when it was destroyed?

Arif Ali/AFP/Getty Images

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Our discussions went on for hours, and though they were sometimes heated, there was an underlying friendliness to the students' manner that contrasted with their extreme rhetoric. As the night wore on, the tone began to shift. The students were surprised to learn that I knew Jews who had been killed in the Twin Towers and their relatives who still struggle with their loss. My Indonesian colleague talked about Indonesian and other Muslims he knew in the United States and their daily lives and views. A tentative human bond developed between us and the students. Not long before dawn, as morning prayers approached, their insistent questioning took an unexpected turn: how could they obtain visas to study in the United States?

After that, whenever we had the chance to speak with young radicals in Indonesia, out of the hearing of their leaders and late at night, we'd always ask: How many of you want to study in America? Invariably, almost everyone said yes, and those who still disdained the Great Satan were eager to study in Canada, Australia, or France instead.

We were intrigued. What if supporters of al-Qaeda in countries like Pakistan or Saudi Arabia felt the same way as young Indonesians? Was their support for al-Qaeda—and their hatred of America—really as intense as it had first appeared?

Terror Free Tomorrow, our nonprofit polling organization, decided to pursue this question further. Over the past several years, we have conducted some thirty nationwide public opinion surveys in Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Muslim world. In the process, we've assembled the first comprehensive picture of how people who are sympathetic to al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden feel about America—and what can be done to change their resentment.

Our findings will probably surprise you. Like most analysts, we had assumed that radical views in the Muslim world were the outgrowth of a deeply held ideology, unshakeable without profound shifts in American foreign policy. We were wrong. American actions may inflame Muslim opinion. But the solutions that can cool that hostility aren't always the ones you'd expect.

Since September 11, many Americans have been understandably alarmed by polls showing that a sizable minority of the world's Muslims express sympathy for al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, or the Taliban. Our own polls confirm this general pattern. In recent surveys, 15 percent of Saudis said they support bin Laden. Twenty four percent of Pakistanis said the same.

The first key fact to understand about such numbers is that people who say they support al-Qaeda or bin Laden aren't in any obvious or measurable way very distinguishable from their compatriots. Our surveys showed that those who express support for bin Laden and al-Qaeda mirror their countrymen in almost every respect, from gender to level of educational achievement. Al-Qaeda and bin Laden supporters are no more fervently Islamic in their practices or beliefs than other Muslims. Nor are they poorer or more disadvantaged—if anything, al-Qaeda and bin Laden sympathizers tend to earn more and to be better off than their fellow citizens.

More important, those who express sympathy for bin Laden turn out to have views that are remarkably similar to those who *don't* support bin Laden. Like their compatriots, people who favor al-Qaeda and bin Laden are principally motivated by their perception of Western hostility to Islam. In all our surveys, and those of others, the view of American antagonism is an almost universally held belief among Muslims everywhere. The U.S.-led war on terror, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, even our post-9/11 restrictions on visas (stories of upstanding Muslims denied entry to the United States for seemingly arbitrary reasons are a staple of the Muslim press) are seen as assaults on Islam in general and on Muslims in particular. At its core, Muslims feel that the United States does not respect their views, values, identity and the right to determine their own affairs.

None of this is necessarily surprising. More unexpected is this finding: both bin Laden supporters and non-bin Laden supporters hold remarkable similar political goals for their countries—goals that are often anathema to the ideology espoused by al-Qaeda. Three recent nationwide public opinion surveys of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia conducted by Terror Free Tomorrow at the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008 illustrate our findings best.

Like other Pakistanis, bin Laden supporters consider an independent judiciary, free elections and economic improvement the most important goals for their government.

Let's start with Pakistan, the second largest—and the only nuclear-armed—Muslim nation, now home base to bin Laden, al-Qaeda and the Taliban. In our latest survey this January, almost a quarter of the respondents said that they had a favorable opinion of bin Laden. But upon closer examination, this cohort was no more likely to have radical views than those Pakistanis who are not sympathetic to extremist groups. Like the rest of Pakistanis, bin Laden and al-Qaeda supporters consider an independent judiciary, free press, free elections and an improving economy the most important goals for their government. In fact, more than eight in ten bin Laden and al-Qaeda supporters chose these goals as

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their highest priority—significantly greater than the percentage that selected implementing strict Islamic Sharia law as their highest priority.

We found similar opinions in Saudi Arabia— home country of bin Laden and fifteen of the nineteen September 11th terrorists. In December 2007, our nationwide survey revealed that Saudis with a favorable opinion of bin Laden and al-Qaeda don't generally have implacable anti-American attitudes, or even support terrorist attacks. For the 15 percent of the Saudi population with a positive opinion of bin Laden, addressing the problem of terrorism is the most important priority they have for the Saudi government, chosen by more than 90 percent—about the same percentage as those who do not have a favorable view of bin Laden or al-Qaeda.

Why would so many Saudis and Pakistanis express sympathy for terrorist organizations and yet also favor democratic reforms and crackdowns on terrorist violence? One possibility is that these bin Laden supporters are not telling the truth to pollsters. Recent events in Pakistan, however, suggest that's not the case.

Before Pakistan held elections on February 18, 2008, we conducted a poll asking voters whether they would vote for al-Qaeda if it appeared on the ballot as a political party. Only 1 percent of Pakistanis said yes—a far smaller percentage than the 18 percent of Pakistanis who told us that they sympathize with al-Qaeda. The Taliban would have drawn just 3 percent of the vote. As it turned out, our survey almost exactly mirrored the actual election results. In areas near or in the home base of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, Islamist parties sympathetic to these groups suffered stinging defeats. In the North West Frontier Province, the Islamist parties lost fifty-seven of their sixty-eight seats in the provincial assembly. Evidently, professed support for al-Qaeda or the Taliban doesn't mean that Pakistanis actually want these groups to *rule* them.

So what makes some Pakistanis say they support al-Qaeda when they don't in the voting booth? The answer seems to be that they, like nearly all Pakistanis, are angry. They're angry at President Pervez Musharraf for his heavy-handed authoritarian rule, and angry at the United States for a host of real and perceived sins, including (until very recently) the Bush administration's strong backing of the Musharraf regime. Declaring solidarity with al-Qaeda or the Taliban is a way for Pakistanis to express this anger. If there is a difference between those who sympathize with bin Laden and those who do not, it is that bin Laden supporters feel their resentment more intensely.

Our polls show that the anger Muslims around the world feel towards the United States is not primarily directed at our people or values—even those who say they support bin Laden don't, for the most part, "hate us for our freedoms," as President Bush has claimed. Rather, what drives Islamic public opinion is a pervasive perception that the United States and the West are hostile towards Islam. This perception, right or wrong, is fed by a variety of American actions, from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the overarching global war on terror. These actions are seen as profoundly disrespectful and humiliating because they amount to America forcing its will on the Muslim world.

A good illustration comes from our most recent survey of Saudi Arabia. It showed that among the highest priorities for Saudis are free elections and a free press. Yet it also showed that the least popular American policy is the U.S. push to spread democracy in the Middle East. The point is that Saudis want to determine their own affairs and not have the United States impose its values, even when they share those values.

Significantly, however, our polling indicates that there are steps that the United States can undertake that could dramatically reverse anti-American attitudes born of this sense of disrespect—if we ask first, rather than thinking we know what's best. Indeed, these steps are relatively easier to take than more fundamental changes, such as an immediate withdrawal from Iraq or Afghanistan.

For instance, six out of every ten Pakistanis who have a favorable view toward bin Laden and al-Qaeda said their opinion of America would significantly improve if the United States increased educational, medical and humanitarian aid to Pakistan, as well as the number of visas available to Pakistanis to work or study in the United States. In fact, *more* bin Laden and al-Qaeda supporters said their opinion of the United States would improve with such American policies than did non-bin Laden supporters. Not everyone would change their mind: One in ten bin Laden and al-Qaeda supporters said that their opinion of the United States would not change no matter what America does. This is al-Qaeda's real, far smaller core of fervent and intractable support.

The same trend holds in Saudi Arabia, which, of course, borders Iraq. While the leading step that would improve opinion of the United States would be an immediate withdrawal of American forces from Iraq, this was closely followed by a desire for the United States to increase visas and free trade. Like their fellow citizens, 88 percent of Saudis who have a favorable opinion of bin Laden cited U.S. withdrawal from Iraq as a policy change that would significantly elevate their view of the United States. Three-quarters cited increased visas to and free trade with the United States. And more than half of both supporters and non-supporters of bin Laden said that these actions would improve their opinion of the United States a great deal.

The prospect of the United States brokering a comprehensive peace between Israelis and Palestinians is distant, but if it became a reality, our surveys suggest that this would significantly change perceptions of America in the Muslim world, especially among Palestinians and Syrians. But right now in Saudi Arabia, less than a quarter of Saudis believe that a successful peace process would improve their opinion of the United States a great deal. By contrast, twice as many

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Saudis said that increased trade and visas would improve their disposition towards the United States a great deal. And Muslims who live further away from the Middle East place even less importance on the peace process. When Indonesians and Bangladeshis, for example, were given a menu of choices for future American policies, including increased educational scholarships, direct medical assistance, free trade, and stronger American support for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the latter finished last or next to last.

This last finding shouldn't be surprising. While people everywhere may care strongly about the suffering of their co-religionists in foreign lands, they are naturally more focused on the problems they face at home. Consequently, it is often easier to win them over with actions that affect their lives and those of their countrymen directly. If the United States demonstrates that it respects people by helping to make tangible improvements in their daily lives, even the anti-American attitudes of those who have a positive opinion of al-Qaeda are likely to change dramatically as well.

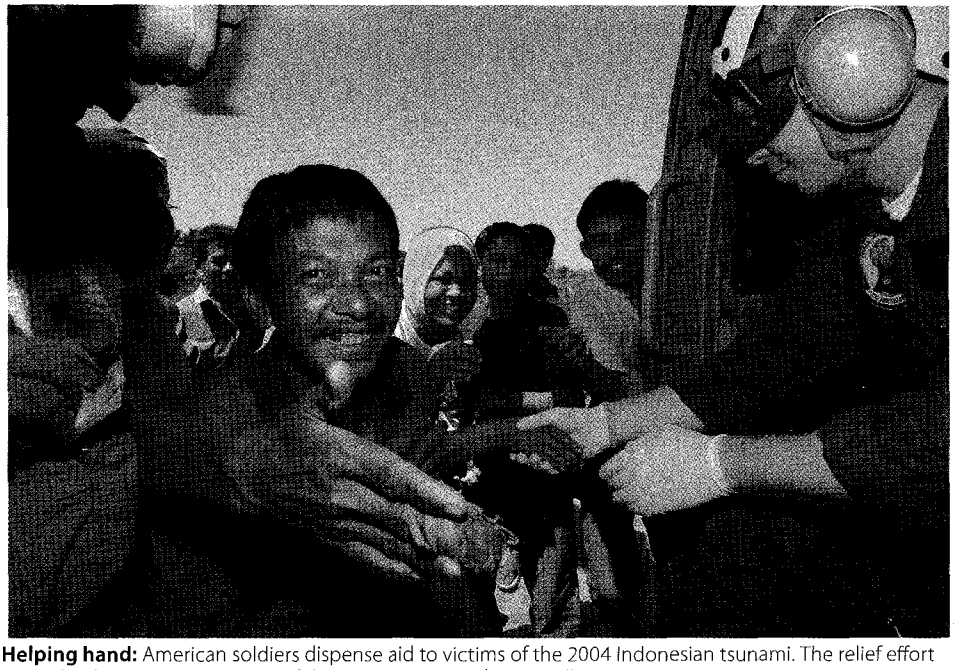
As it happens, we have proof of just how effective such changes can be. After a massive tsunami struck Indonesia on December 26, 2004, the United States led an extraordinary international relief effort for the victims. Of course, America dispenses aid to many countries, but the money is normally funneled through governments, and ordinary citizens rarely see or experience the results. The Indonesian relief effort, by contrast, consisted of on-the-ground, people-to-people assistance, and was broadcast non-stop on Indonesian television. The assistance not only saved lives but demonstrated to Indonesians that America sincerely cared about their well-being.

Afterwards, public opinion among Indonesians dramatically swung in favor of the United States. This gain in America's reputation was accompanied by a corresponding decline in backing for the perceived symbols of the most radical anti-American views—bin Laden, al-Qaeda and their local Islamist allies.

To be sure, American aid wasn't the sole reason that the public turned against the radicals. The deaths caused by terrorist attacks and increased democratic participation inside Indonesia also contributed. But the U.S. humanitarian mission was one of the most important factors. Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has said that this shift in Indonesian public opinion towards America is "one of the defining moments of this new century."

The Indonesian example is not the only one. After a devastating earthquake hit Pakistan in 2005, America stepped in with a similarly intensive relief effort. Afterwards, our surveys found that 79 percent of self-identified bin Laden supporters thought well of the United States because of the humanitarian mission. Among all Pakistanis, the U.S. government was more popular than al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or any Pakistani Islamist radical group—even among Pakistanis who thought favorably of these groups.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the United States can simply increase direct aid and visas without changing its overarching policies in the Muslim world. Again, America's relief efforts in Indonesia and Pakistan are instructive. Indonesia is ruled by a democratic government. And the United States has supported that government, in part with military training and assistance in its fight against domestic terror groups, rather than direct U.S. military action against those groups. Consequently, goodwill towards America among Indonesians has, for the most part, been sustained. Nearly three years after the tsunami, almost 60 percent of Indonesians said that American assistance had made them favorable towards the United States.



Helping hand: American soldiers dispense aid to victims of the 2004 Indonesian tsunami. The relief effort caused Indonesian impressions of the U.S. to improve dramatically.

Jewel Samad/AFP/Getty Images

In Pakistan, on the other hand, America has unabashedly supported the unpopular and repressive rule of General Musharraf, and has also carried out military strikes inside Pakistan. Combined with the specter of the war on terror, these policies have dissolved the warm feelings generated by America's earthquake relief. In surveys we conducted in 2006, 2007 and 2008, we confirmed that the positive feelings that stemmed from the relief effort have almost entirely dissipated. Humanitarian policies provide an opening. Yet, absent other political and economic factors, they are unlikely to

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result in sustained, long-term improvements in public opinion.

Our polls provide three useful lessons for the next president. The first is this: don't be too alarmed by the apparent high level of support for bin Laden in the Muslim world. Such support is soft, and can be made softer still with the right policies.

The second lesson is that in order to repair the dismal impression that many Muslims have of the United States, a new president doesn't need to pull all troops out of Iraq right away, or solve the Israel-Palestine conflict overnight. More modest—if still politically tricky—actions can have an immediate and dramatic impact. It is essential for the United States to adopt policies that reveal a different side of American power—one that demonstrates respect and compassion by improving the lives of individual Muslims. Such policies include increasing student and work visas, direct humanitarian aid, and trade agreements. Since much of the Muslim anger towards the United States and the West is fueled by the widespread perception of a lack of respect, all of these people-based policies send a powerful, tangible message that we care about Muslims and regard them as equals.

The third lesson is that these practical, direct-to-the-public policy initiatives should be seen as an opening to a new American stance that, in both word and deed, manifests respectful relations between people. These initiatives need to be followed up with meaningful action on the major geostrategic issues that fuel Muslim resentment. We need to create more effective counterterrorism strategies, break the logjam on peace with Israel, and resolve the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Otherwise, whatever goodwill we create is likely to fade.

To repair the dismal relationship between the U.S. and the Muslim world, a new president doesn't need to pull out of Iraq right away or solve the Israel-Palestine conflict overnight.

That goodwill is an invaluable asset to our national security. Negative public opinion towards the United States acts as a real political constraint on the leaders of Muslim countries, limiting their ability to work with America and its allies on everything from counterterrorism operations to negotiating peace agreements. When public opinion towards America has improved and support for terror organizations has declined, governments—even with the overt help of the United States, as in Indonesia and the Philippines—have been able to isolate and target the terrorists.

In the wake of 9/11, America fell into a vicious cycle in which our major security policies, aimed at combating terrorism, actually made the threat of terrorism worse by inflaming popular sympathy for extremism. Turning that opinion around could be the first step towards finally getting our counterterrorism strategy right. And while first steps are often said to be the hardest, in this case, the opposite is true. Indeed, as we learned that night in Jakarta, the most important first step is the easiest. It is to listen. WM

Kenneth Ballen is the president of Terror Free Tomorrow: The Center for Public Opinion, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization which has conducted international polling in Pakistan, Iran, Syria, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Turkey and elsewhere. The results of the surveys are at www.terrorfreetomorrow.org.

How We Can Help al-Qaeda Ruin its Own Reputation

Terror Free Tomorrow's surveys reveal some good news: In many Muslim countries, public support for extremism is in decline. In Pakistan, for instance, popular regard for bin Laden and al-Qaeda has decreased by half in just six months. In the North West Frontier Province, near the Afghan border where al-Qaeda is based, that support has plunged from 70 percent last summer to single digits this year.

These changing attitudes are largely the result not of America's actions, but al-Qaeda's: citizens in Pakistan and other countries are becoming increasingly disgusted with the group's barbaric violence. This shift in mood is significant because history shows that success against terrorism almost always occurs when local residents turn on the terrorists themselves. Even more important, when al-Qaeda and the Taliban become unpopular, a democratically elected Pakistani government can aggressively isolate and pursue them without taking as many domestic political risks.

But the new Pakistani government's hand would be strengthened even further if the staunchly anti-American views of its citizens could be diminished. Don't forget, it is bin Laden's potency as an anti-American icon that drives much of his support. And as we saw in Indonesia, when opinion towards America improves, support for bin Laden and al-Qaeda declines as well. Put these two dynamics (declining sympathy for terrorists and rising regard for America) together, and you have a powerful tool against terrorists.

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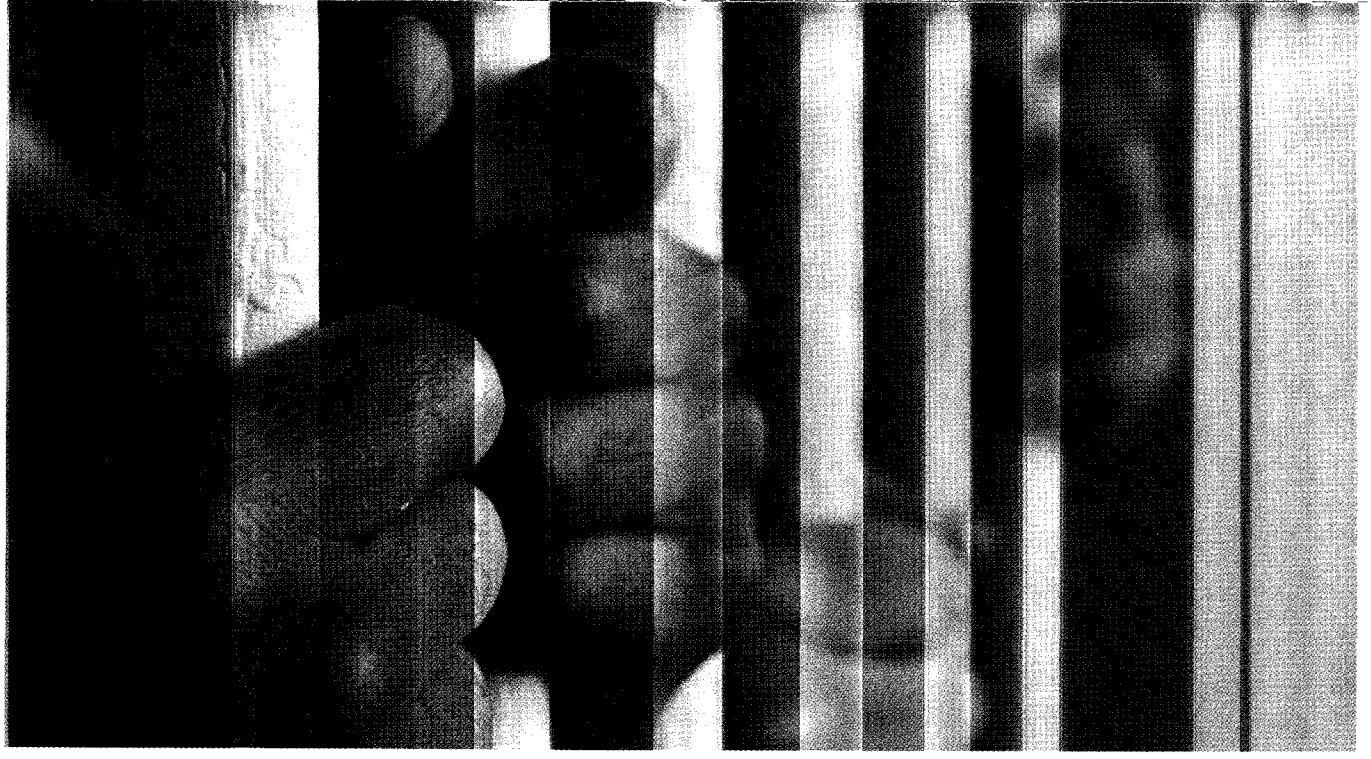

Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

Too Weird for *The Wire*

How black Baltimore drug dealers are using white supremacist legal theories to confound the feds.

By Kevin Carey

On November 16, 2005, Willie "Bo" Mitchell and three co-defendants—Shelton "Little Rock" Harris, Shelly "Wayne" Martin, and Shawn Earl Gardner—appeared for a hearing in the modern federal courthouse in downtown Baltimore, Maryland. The four African American men were facing federal charges of racketeering, weapons possession, drug dealing, and five counts of first-degree murder. For nearly two years the prosecutors had been methodically building their case, with the aim of putting the defendants to death. In Baltimore, which has a murder rate eight times higher than that of New York City, such cases are depressingly commonplace.

A few minutes after 10 a.m., United States District Court Judge Andre M. Davis took his seat and began his introductory remarks. Suddenly, the leader of the defendants, Willie Mitchell, a short, unremarkable looking twenty-eight-year-old with close-cropped hair, leapt from his chair, grabbed a microphone, and launched into a bizarre soliloquy.

"I am not a defendant," Mitchell declared. "I do not have attorneys." The court "lacks territorial jurisdiction over me," he argued, to the amazement of his lawyers. To support these contentions, he cited decades-old acts of Congress involving the abandonment of the gold standard and the creation of the Federal Reserve. Judge Davis, a Baltimore-born African American in his late fifties, tried to interrupt. "I object," Mitchell repeated robotically. Shelly Martin and Shelton Harris followed Mitchell to the microphone, giving the same speech verbatim. Their attorneys tried to intervene, but when Harris's lawyer leaned over to speak to him, Harris shoved him away.

Judge Davis ordered the three defendants to be removed from the court, and turned to Gardner, who had, until then, remained quiet. But Gardner, too, intoned the same strange speech. "I am Shawn Earl Gardner, live man, flesh and blood," he proclaimed. Every time the judge referred to him as "the defendant" or "Mr. Gardner," Gardner automatically interrupted: "My name is *Shawn Earl Gardner*, sir." Davis tried to explain to Gardner that his behavior was putting his chances

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of acquittal or leniency at risk. "Don't throw your life away," Davis pleaded. But Gardner wouldn't stop. Judge Davis concluded the hearing, determined to find out what was going on.

As it turned out, he wasn't alone. In the previous year, nearly twenty defendants in other Baltimore cases had begun adopting what lawyers in the federal courthouse came to call "the flesh-and-blood defense." The defense, such as it is, boils down to this: As officers of the court, all defense lawyers are really on the government's side, having sworn an oath to uphold a vast, century-old conspiracy to conceal the fact that most aspects of the federal government are illegitimate, including the courts, which have no constitutional authority to bring people to trial. The defendants also believed that a legal distinction could be drawn between their name as written on their indictment and their true identity as a "flesh and blood man."

Judge Davis and his law clerk pored over the case files, which led them to a series of strange Web sites. The flesh-and-blood defense, they discovered, came from a place far from Baltimore, from people as different from Willie Mitchell as people could possibly be. Its antecedents stretched back decades, involving religious zealots, gun nuts, tax protestors, and violent separatists driven by theories that had fueled delusions of Aryan supremacy and race war in gun-loaded compounds in the wilds of Montana and Idaho. Although Mitchell and his peers didn't know it, they were inheriting the intellectual legacy of white supremacists who believe that America was irrevocably broken when the 14th Amendment provided equal rights to former slaves. It was the ideology that inspired the Oklahoma City bombing, the biggest act of domestic terrorism in the nation's history, and now, a decade later, it had somehow sprouted in the crime-ridden ghettos of Baltimore.

Like the Midwestern farmers before them, the Baltimore inmates were susceptible to the notion that the federal government was engaged in a massive plot to deprive them of life, liberty, and property.

The series of events that led to the prosecution of Willie Mitchell et al are as convoluted, tragic and intermittently absurd as an episode of HBO's acclaimed Baltimore crime drama, *The Wire*. Mitchell and company came of age on the streets of West Baltimore, a few miles and a world away from the rejuvenated inner harbor and the tourist attractions near the federal courthouse. According to prosecutors, the group began selling drugs together as teenagers in the mid-1990s, driving up I-95 to New York City, buying half kilos of cocaine in upper Manhattan and cooking it into crack to sell back home. They added heroin to their repertoire a few years later, as well as robbing and killing other drug dealers. By 2002, they were firmly established in what passes as normal enterprise in a hollowed-out economy like Baltimore, where the drug trade often provides more opportunity than legitimate work and the bedrock institutions of family and school have crumbled. They had children out of wedlock with multiple women. They were occasionally arrested, although they never served much time. It was an insular culture where a ruthless prohibition against "snitching" to the police was often more powerful than any law. Even as cities like New York saw the murder rate decline dramatically, drug killings in Baltimore continued at a steady clip.

According to the indictment, the end began on February 18, 2002, in a downtown Baltimore nightclub called Hammerjacks, where Mitchell got into a dispute and stabbed a fellow drug dealer in the back, seriously wounding him. If Mitchell had hoped to get away with this attempted murder, he was swiftly and brutally set straight by the drug dealer's associates. When police on patrol found Mitchell later that evening, he was on a sidewalk with several men jumping on his head. Mitchell survived the assault, but he remained in serious trouble. The police had issued a warrant for his arrest; more ominously, his enemies had placed a $10,000 contract on his head.

Mitchell probably didn't know exactly what his enemies had in mind, but he was seasoned enough to realize that they wanted him killed. Ten days after the club incident, prosecutors allege, he made a phone call to an associate of the men who had beaten him up. The associate was a drug dealer named Oliver "Woody" McCaffity. Mitchell proposed that the two men meet that evening for a drug deal.

Neither man came to the meeting alone. Mitchell brought a friend, Shelton Harris. McCaffity brought his sometime girlfriend, Lisa Brown. Brown was a pastor's daughter, a computer systems analyst and mother of three. Her parents told reporters that she had broken up with McCaffity after learning of his involvement with drugs. But when he called and invited her to the movies, she decided to go along.

The two parties drove to the Park Heights section of Northwest Baltimore. It was a quick meeting. Mitchell and Harris climbed into the backseat of McCaffity's Infiniti Q-45. Then they shot McCaffity through the head and fired through Brown's raised right hand into her left temple, where police later found a .357 caliber bullet. The bodies of McCaffity and Brown were left in the car, which rolled downhill and rammed into a nearby tree at the dead-end of the street. Police found it two hours later. A palm print on the car window was lat-

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er matched to Harris, and McCaffity's cell phone records revealed calls that night to Mitchell's phone. Mitchell, suspecting that McCaffity's associates were going to try to kill him, had apparently decided to kill first. The murder would probably not have attracted much attention, except for the fact that McCaffity's Infiniti was owned by Hasim Rahman, the recently dethroned heavyweight boxing champion of the world. McCaffity was a friend and business associate of Rahman, causing the ex-champ to quickly call a press conference denying any involvement in the crimes. (Police have never alleged otherwise.)

If the killing of McCaffity and Brown had been a successful preemptive strike, Mitchell was also prepared to kill for more mundane reasons. On March 24, a few weeks after the McCaffity murder, Mitchell allegedly called a former high school classmate named Darryl Wyche and offered to buy some heroin and cocaine from him. Darryl, excited by the prospect of a big sale, agreed. The two made plans to meet in a nearby industrial park around midnight.

Again, neither party came alone. Wyche brought his younger brother Tony, who had reluctantly agreed to drive. Mitchell brought Harris again, as well as two more friends: Shelly Martin and Shawn Gardner.

The Wyche brothers opened the back door of their Honda to let Mitchell and his men into the back seat. Then each received a bullet in the side of the head. The next morning the police found the bodies, seat belts still on. (Mitchell appears to have seen Wyche as an easy source of drugs and cash.)

But Mitchell's luck was about to end. When Baltimore homicide detectives found the bodies of the Wyche brothers, they assumed they had come across another hard-to-solve drug killing. Then they received an unexpected phone call. It was from Darryl Wyche's mother-in-law, who reported finding a strange message on her phone. Recorded at 12:43 a.m., the message was four and a half minutes of a group of men with names like "Wayne" and "Shorty" saying things like "Bup-bup-bup-bup-bup, yo, they both fucked." The call had come from the cellphone of Darryl Wyche.

Wyche's family and the police soon figured out what had happened: One of the murderers had stolen Darryl Wyche's phone and forgotten to turn it off. While the killers were driving away, one of them had accidentally pressed the phone's speed dial button, calling Darryl's mother-in-law and producing a most unusual piece of evidence: a voicemail confession. With considerable understatement, a lieutenant in the city homicide unit reflected on his good fortune to the *Baltimore Sun*. "We got lucky," he said. Willie Mitchell and Shelly Martin were soon rounded up and put in jail.

What would become the fifth and final murder charge in the case of Willie Mitchell and his cohorts took place two months later. This time, only Mitchell's friend Shawn Gardner was directly involved. It began with a man named Darius Spence, who had found out that his wife, Tanya, was cheating on him with a local drug dealer everyone called "Momma."

Spence decided to have Momma beaten up severely. To accomplish this, he negotiated with another drug dealer named Willie Montgomery. Would Montgomery be willing to beat up Momma in exchange for money? But Montgomery had another proposition altogether. Beating Momma up didn't make sense, Montgomery argued, because then Momma would undoubtedly try to kill Montgomery. It was better just to kill Momma outright, and for five thousand dollars, Montgomery would be glad to do the job. Spence said he'd think it over.

Unfortunately for Darius Spence, Montgomery wasn't interested in waiting around for an answer. Instead, sensing opportunity, Montgomery decided to tell Momma about the hit. If I turn down the deal, Montgomery explained, then Spence will probably just hire someone else to kill you. Therefore, Montgomery reasoned, you should hire me to kill Spence first. Momma was persuaded. (As Montgomery later explained to the prosecutors, "I guess he like that idea better than Darius Spence's idea.")

"You have invoked ideas formulated and advanced by people who think less of you than they think of dirt," the judge said.

To execute the hit on Spence, Montgomery recruited two associates, one of whom was Shawn Gardner. For the next two months, the three men staked out Spence's apartment. The plan was for Shawn Gardner and his associate to invade from the basement and carry out the killing, and then run to a nearby getaway car, which was to be driven by Montgomery. Special care was to be taken not to harm Tanya, and they would cover her eyes with duct tape to prevent her from identifying them. Still, Montgomery warned Momma that he couldn't guarantee Tanya's safety. "If it's up to me, she won't be hurt," Montgomery told Momma, "but some things could go wrong." Momma's reply was to the point: "Do what you do."

On June 7, 2002, the three men drove to the Spence apartment, a worn red brick building at the end of a cul-de-sac a few miles from Baltimore city. But the hit didn't go as planned. Darius Spence wasn't in the apartment, and they didn't manage to blindfold Tanya. As children played outside the Spence apartment, Tanya burst through the kitchen door on the third floor, screaming, "No! No!" Lifting one leg over the balcony, she tried to climb down to the floor below but lost her grip and fell fifteen feet to the ground, landing a few feet from the children. Gasping for breath, she motioned for them to run away before crawling under the first floor balco-

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ny. Moments later, the two killers emerged from the Spence apartment, ran down the steps and stopped a few feet from Tanya, now lying in the fetal position in the dirt and begging for her life. One pulled out a large caliber revolver and fired two shots into Tanya's chest as the children watched. Then both men ran away.

Unfortunately for the killers, Montgomery wasn't where they thought he'd be. Somehow the meeting place had gotten confused, and the getaway failed. Police quickly apprehended Shawn Gardner and his associate. Eventually, the law caught up to Montgomery, too.

Gardner was tried, convicted, and sentenced in state court to life in prison without the possibility of parole for the murder of Tanya Spence. Meanwhile, Willie Mitchell and Shelly Martin were charged by the state with the Wyche brothers' killings and sat in prison for the next year and a half as police and prosecutors assembled their case.

Then, on January 22, 2004—nearly two years after the first four murders—the word came down from the office of U.S. Attorney Thomas DiBiagio: the Willie Mitchell case was going federal, and the government was seeking the death penalty. The Justice Department, DiBiagio explained, was going after "individuals responsible for making life hell in Baltimore."

For Mitchell and company, this was bad news. Instead of jurors selected from the city pool, Mitchell would likely be judged by an all-white panel of citizens from places like Maryland's westernmost rural counties or the far reaches of the Eastern Shore. He would face better-funded prosecutors, and was far more likely to get the death penalty. Maryland has only executed five people in the last thirty years, but in 2005, then-Attorney General John Ashcroft was aggressively seeking death sentences. In fact, the Justice Department was even retrying cases in order to win death penalties for crimes like the Spence murder, for which Shawn Gardner was already serving life without parole.

DiBiagio's office also added a raft of conspiracy charges to the indictment, filed under the federal Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. By alleging that the defendants were part of an organized conspiracy—the so-called "Willie Mitchell organization"—prosecutors could hold all four defendants responsible for any of the crimes the others had committed. That's why Shelton Harris, who wasn't originally arrested for the Wyche or the McCaffity and Brown murders, was pulled off the street and charged with the full slate of crimes. It's also why Mitchell and Harris were charged with the Spence murder, although they were already in jail when Shawn Gardner committed it. RICO is normally applied to members of the mafia and organized crime, and its use sent a clear message: the government was coming at Mitchell and company with everything it had.

The prosecutors bolstered the conspiracy argument by noting that, unlike most Baltimore drug dealers, Mitchell and company had incorporated a legal entity for which they all worked and allegedly funneled proceeds of their drug business into: "Shake Down Entertainment, Ltd." The group promoted rap CDs and concerts through the company, which even had its own record label, "Shystyville." Soon, Shystyville CDs with titles like "Pure Shit" became evidence of not just the conspiracy but the crimes themselves, with prosecutors entering into the record lyrics like these:

I watch ya brains fly all over on the bitch next to you
Homeboy it's up to you I could put this pup to you
Then to pumpin' you up like a innertube
Send shots that'll pump up the end of you
Leave you all fat and bloated you know I keep
the Mac loaded then I like ta clack rollin'
That's why Bo and Weez on lock now and every day on lock down
Niggas getting shot down for runnin' they mouth clown
Tell me how it feels with a gun in ya mouth now

Prosecutors alleged that the "bitch next to you" was Lisa Brown, who was sitting beside Oliver McCaffity when he was shot through the head, that a "pup" is slang for the large-caliber revolver used in the killing, that the "Bo" on "lock now" was the imprisoned Willie "Bo" Mitchell, and that the reference to "Niggas getting shot for runnin' they mouth" amounted to witness intimidation. Faced with the prospect of an all-white jury hearing this music in the courtroom, the defense lawyers objected on the grounds that lots of songs have lyrics that "proudly refer to violent retaliation," offering by way of example country star Toby Keith's "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)."

Nearly two years passed. The wheels of justice were turning, slowly but surely. Then came the memorable hearing in which the defendants debuted the flesh-and-blood defense. After that, everything changed.

A month after the hearing, Judge Davis took the unusual step of issuing a written opinion denying all of the defendant's "unusual—if not bizarre" arguments. "Perhaps they would even be humorous," Davis wrote, "were the stakes not so high ... It is truly ironic that four African-American defendants here apparently rely on an ideology derived from a famously discredited notion: the illegitimacy of the Fourteenth Amendment." One can understand his incredulity that four Baltimore drug dealers might invoke a racist argument that dates back to the nineteenth century. But as it turns out, that's when the seeds of the flesh-and-blood defense were sown.

In 1878, southern Democrats pushed legislation through Congress limiting the ability of the federal government to marshal troops on U.S. soil. Known as Posse Comitatus, (Latin for "power of the county") the law's authors hoped to constrain the government's ability to protect black southern-

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ers from violence and discrimination. The act symbolically marked the end of Reconstruction and the beginning of Jim Crow.

For the next eight decades, black Americans lived under the yoke of institutional racism. But by the late 1950s, the civil rights movement was growing in strength. In 1957, President Eisenhower sent 1,200 troops from the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock, Arkansas, so that nine black students could safely enter a previously all-white high school. The landmark Civil Rights Act followed in 1964.

These developments horrified one William Gale, a World War II veteran, insurance salesman, self-styled minister of racist Christian Identity theology, and raving anti-Semite. In 1971, he launched a movement whose impact would reverberate through the radical fringes of American society for decades to come. He called it Posse Comitatus, named for the 1878 law he believed Eisenhower had violated by sending the troops to Little Rock. In a series of tapes and self-published pamphlets, Gale explained that county sheriffs were the supreme legal law enforcement officers in the land, and that county residents had the right to form a posse to enforce the Constitution—however they, as "sovereign citizens," chose to interpret it. Public officials who interfered, instructed Gale, should be "hung by the neck" at high noon.

Gale's racist beliefs were hardly unique. His singular innovation was to devise a "legal" philosophy that was enormously appealing to disaffected, alienated citizens. It was a promise of power, a means of asserting that *they* were the true inheritors of the founding fathers' ideal, a dream they believed had been corrupted by a vast conspiracy that only they could see. Gale's ideas gave people on the paranoid edge of society a collective identity. It told them what they desperately wanted to hear: that the federal government was illegitimate, and that the legal weapons the state used to oppress them could be turned against the state.

Soon, Posses were sprouting across the country, attracting veterans of the 1960s-era tax protest movement, Second Amendment absolutists, Christian Identity adherents, and ardent anti-communists who had abandoned the John Birch Society because they felt the organization wasn't extreme enough. Local groups would meet to share literature, listen to tapes of Gale's sermons, and discuss preparations for the approaching End Times. This extremist stew produced exotic amalgamations of paranoia, such as when Posse members would explain the need for local militias to stockpile weapons in order to defend white Christians from blacks in the coming race war sparked by the inevitable economic collapse caused by the income tax and a cabal of international Jewish bankers bent on global dominance through one world government, for Satan.

While local Posses would periodically confront law enforcement officials in the 1970s, (usually in property disputes), they were often incompetent, and few people were hurt. But things took a serious turn in 1978, when thousands of farmers rallied in Washington D.C. seeking relief from low commodity prices, high interest rates, and farm debt. When Congressional relief attempts failed, some farmers became susceptible to peddlers of the Posse ideology, which preached that the farm crisis had been brought on by the international Jewish banking conspiracy, abandonment of the gold standard and a malevolent Federal Reserve.

By 1982, Bill Gale had flown to Kansas to conduct paramilitary training and indoctrination for splinter groups of disaffected farmers. At night, a country music station in Dodge City broadcast tapes of Gale's sermons. "You're either going to get back to the Constitution of the United States in your government," he intoned, "or officials are gonna hang by the neck until they're dead ... Arise and fight! If a Jew comes near you, run a sword through him." As Posse ideology rippled across the distressed farm belt, violence followed. Several deadly confrontations between Posse adherents and law enforcement made national headlines; Geraldo Rivera descended on Nebraska to document the "Seeds of Hate" in America's heartland. By 1987, Gale's rhetoric had escalated further. He told his followers that "You've got an enemy government running around ... its source and its location is Washington, D.C., and the federal buildings they've built with your tax money all over the cities in this land."

When the end goal is execution, even the most ludicrous defenses are taken seriously.

Hucksters and charlatans prowled the Midwest as the farm crisis deepened, selling desperate farmers expensive seminars and prepackaged legal defenses "guaranteed" to cancel debts and forestall foreclosure. Since the gold standard had been abandoned in 1933, they argued, money had no inherent value, and so neither did their debts. All they had to do, farmers were told, was opt out of the system by sending a letter to the appropriate authorities renouncing their driver's license, birth certificate, and social security number. That number was allegedly tied to a secret government account held in a secure subterranean facility in lower Manhattan, where citizens are used as collateral against international debts issued by the Fed and everyone's name is on a master list, spelled in capital letters—the very same capital letters used in the official court documents detailing foreclosure and other actions against them. The capital letter name was nothing but an artificial construct, they were told, a legal "straw man." It wasn't *them*—natural, live, flesh and blood men.

Bill Gale died on April 28, 1988, three months after being sentenced in federal court for conspiracy, tax crimes,

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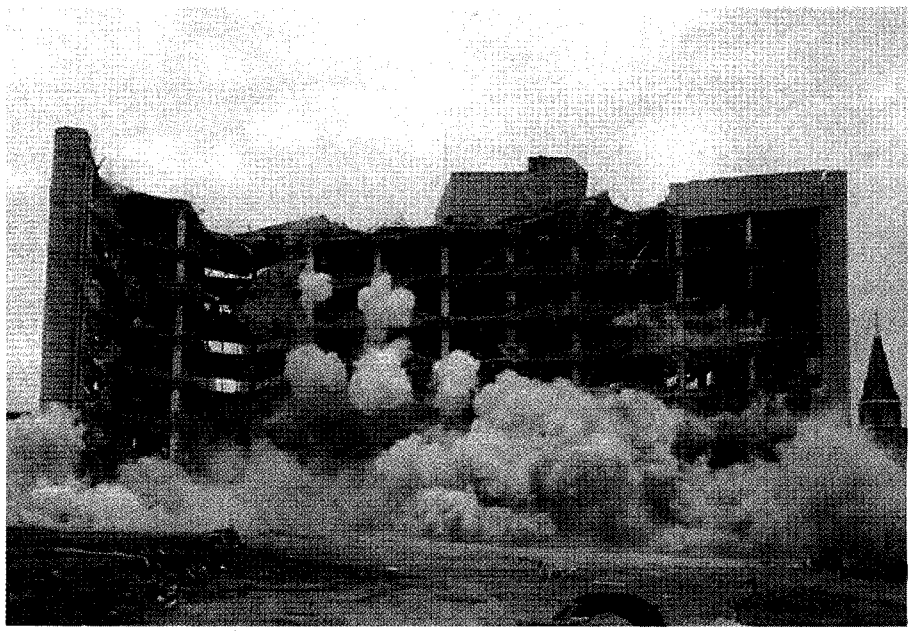
and mailing death threats to the Internal Revenue Service. By that time, the farm crisis had begun to recede. Posse ideology simmered for the next few years, morphing into the "Christian Patriot" movement, which sanded down some of the roughest racist and anti-Semitic edges while retaining the core beliefs of Constitutional fundamentalism. The patriots saw themselves as "sovereign citizens," unlike the "federal citizens" who had been created by the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection under the law.

The deadly confrontations between federal agents and extremists at Ruby Ridge in 1992 and Waco, Texas in 1993 brought latent anger with the federal government back to a boil. The militia movement of the 1990s built on Posse tenets of county-based, self-organized paramilitary groups led by citizens expressing their basic Constitutional rights. Most groups stuck with conducting survivalist training camps and filing bogus liens against houses owned by local judges. But a few did much more.



Blowback: The bombing of the Murrah federal building, by constitutional fundamentalist Timothy McVeigh, was the biggest act of domestic terrorism in American history.

In 1993, a Michigan farmer and survivalist named James Nichols was pulled over for speeding. Instead of simply paying the fine, he argued in court that his "sovereign citizen" status made him immune to prosecution. That same year, James' brother Terry tried to pay off a $17,000 debt with a fake check issued by a radical "family farm preservation" group run by Posse adherents. Two years later, Terry Nichols helped to bring the Posse's anti-government hatred to its ultimate fruition. On April 18, 2005, he and a friend named Timothy McVeigh loaded 108 fifty-pound bags of ammonium nitrate fertilizer into a Ryder truck. The next day, McVeigh bombed the Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people on the second anniversary of Waco.

After the attack, the Feds began cracking down on white supremacist groups, including one called the "Montana Freemen," who were, in the words of hate-group expert Daniel Levitas, "the direct ideological descendants of the Posse Comitatus." (Levitas' book, *The Terrorist Next Door,* contains the definitive account of Bill Gale and the Posse.) The Freemen were arrested in their isolated compound after a three-month standoff with the FBI. At trial, they filed an array of bizarre documents citing the Fed, the gold standard, the 14th Amendment, and the Uniform Commercial Code, but to no avail. They were sent to the maximum security "Supermax" federal prison in Florence, Colorado, where they remain today.

But the appeal of their anti-government dogma didn't disappear. The Freemen continued to attract sympathizers outside Supermax walls. Some collected the documents the Freemen filed during their trial and began offering them for sale via advertisements in "America's Bulletin," a newsletter espousing Posse-style anti-government theories that is widely distributed throughout the prison system by white supremacists.

In October 2004, a prisoner named Michael Burpee arrived at the Maryland Correctional Adjustment Center in downtown Baltimore. Burpee had recently been convicted in Florida of trafficking PCP to Maryland. Hoping for leniency, he pled guilty, only to receive a twenty seven-year prison sentence dictated by harsh federal sentencing guidelines. Desperate for a way out, he began listening to someone—presumably a fellow prisoner—who explained how the charges were all part of a secret government conspiracy against him. Then Burpee was brought up on new federal drug charges in Maryland, and shipped north. He carried with him a pile of documents that were remarkably similar to those that had been filed by the Montana Freemen.

In Baltimore, Burpee found a group of inmates at the margins of society, people like Willie Mitchell and company who were staring at the full force of the federal government. As one defense attorney representing a flesh-and-blood defendant put it, they "saw a freight train coming and felt three feet tall." Soon the unorthodox legal filings and courtroom outbursts began to multiply. It was, one public defender later explained, "like an infection that was invading our client population of pre-trial detainees." Burpee appears to have been patient zero in the epidemic. For over a year, he harangued

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his lawyers and judge about the conspiracy and spread the word in the Baltimore lockup. Then, in a stroke of bad luck for the public defender's office, the U.S. Attorney's office decided to drop the charges against Burpee—perhaps reasoning that he wasn't worth the hassle considering that he had already been sentenced to twenty-seven years. For Burpee's peers, the decision imbued the flesh-and-blood defense with legitimacy and the hope of freedom.

Before long, the relatives of the defendants were scanning Web sites like www.redemptionservice.com, which offers maps showing how Satanic runes were secretly incorporated into the street plan of Washington, D.C., and a deluxe package of instructions for renouncing one's social security number for only $3,900, payable by check or money order.

Like the Midwestern farmers before them, the Baltimore inmates were susceptible to the notion that the federal government was engaged in a massive, historic plot to deprive them of life, liberty, and property. Such suspicions are prevalent in certain pockets of the black community—that year, a study from the Rand Corporation found that over 25 percent of African Americans surveyed believed the AIDS virus was developed by the government, and 12 percent thought it was released into the population by the CIA. And black separatist groups like the Nation of Islam—also fond of conspiracy theories—have long cultivated members through the prison system; some of these groups have explicitly adopted the language of constitutional fundamentalists. Given these developments, Levitas told me, "I'm surprised this didn't happen sooner."

This, then, was how Willie Mitchell came to draw on the accumulated layers of three decades of right-wing paranoia and demand that his case be dismissed "in accord with ... House Joint Resolution 192, and Public Law 73-10"—laws that involved the abandonment of the gold standard and the Federal Reserve. And it explained why Shawn Gardner kept insisting that he be addressed as "Shawn-Earl: Gardner," rather than the capital-letter SHAWN GARDNER printed on the indictment: he thought that if he could convince the court to call him by his "natural" name, it would be tantamount to admitting that the charges had been filed against someone else.

On the morning of January 10, 2006, two months after the first flesh-and-blood hearing, Gardner returned to Judge Davis's courtroom. Moments after Davis arrived, Gardner stood up. "I object," he said, over and over, until Judge Davis had finally had enough. "Do you know what you're doing?" he asked Gardner. "You are committing suicide in broad daylight. There are public suicides in this country far too often. People jump off the Golden Gate Bridge, the Brooklyn Bridge. People walk into their workplaces with a gun and put the gun up to their head and pull the trigger. People slash their wrists. I don't want you to join that community, but that's what you're doing, sir."

Gardner tried to argue that the court had no power over him under "common law." "At common law," Judge Davis replied, "you were property. You were bought and sold just like those Timberlands on your feet today can be bought and sold. That's what your ancestors were, some of them, and that is what my ancestors were, some of them."

"You have invoked ideas formulated and advanced by people who think less of you than they think of dirt," Davis continued. "The extremists who have concocted these ideas that you are now advancing in this courtroom are laughing their heads off. You are giving them everything they ever wished for. They should be paying you to do what you are doing. They are going to make you the poster child for their movement. When you complete this suicide, they will honor you because you are doing their work, better and more effectively than any of them ever dreamed they could do. Some of them—" "I object," said Gardner, interrupting. "The government wants to do the same thing anyway. So what's the difference?"

Gardner, unrepentant, was escorted from the courtroom. And so the tenets of Posse Comitatus continued their long, strange journey, from the racist, hate-filled mind of William Gale to four black defendants on trial for their life in Baltimore federal court.

A little more than a year after the November 2005 hearing, the flesh-and-blood phenomenon took another twist. A key part of the conspiracy indictment against Mitchell et al was the allegation that the defendants acted *together* in pursuit of criminal goals. The seemingly choreographed speeches and the identical filings, all submitted on the same day and mailed by the same person, suggested that the four defendants were going to great lengths to coordinate their actions, despite being housed in separate prison facilities and having no obvious means of communication. Ergo, evidence that the conspiracy was continuing in jail. The U.S. Attorney's office also added new charges of felony obstruction of justice, citing the disruptive nature of the flesh-and-blood defense. The prosecutors weren't just rejecting the defense as an argument for innocence. They were saying that it was, itself, a crime.

Undaunted, Mitchell and company continued making courtroom speeches and filing more nonsensical motions. One, for instance, claimed that Judge Davis' court only had jurisdiction over crimes committed in federally owned "forts, magazines, arsenals, dockyards, and enclaves."

None of these arguments had a prayer of overturning the charges. But they had an impact nonetheless. They made a long, complex trial longer and more complex still. Seeking the death penalty is rightfully arduous—it requires legal justifications for the penalty itself, enhanced scrutiny over jury selection, an additional penalty phase after a conviction, and so on. Conspiracy charges create further legal burdens. And the way Mitchell et al chose to deal with their attorneys—not dismissing them outright, but asking them to sign a peculiar "contract" that would essentially prohibit them from mounting a defense—created more problems. If the defen-

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dants weren't dealt with carefully, they might be able to appeal by claiming that they had been inadequately represented. The last thing Judge Davis wanted was for an appellate court to throw out a verdict and send the case back to Baltimore to start all over again. According to a source close to the court, dealing with the flesh and blood defense has been "one of the greatest challenges Davis has faced in twenty years as a judge, by far."

By mid-2007, the federal prosecutors were starting to run low on a vital resource: time. As years go by, memories fade, police officers retire or transfer, informants change their mind, and juries wonder, why, if the case is so straightforward, it took so long to make. On September 6, 2007, prosecutors withdrew the death penalty for all four defendants.

Nobody in the Baltimore federal courthouse is willing to state, or even speculate on the record, that Mitchell and his cohorts may have averted death with the flesh-and-blood defense. There are other possibilities involving evidence, witnesses, and Justice Department policy. But the elaborate processes of federal capital cases weren't built to accommodate farcical *pro se* filings and challenges. Traffic offenses, tax cases—even farm foreclosures—are one thing. When the end goal is execution, even the most ludicrous defenses are taken seriously.

On January 8, 2008, the case of *United States of America v. Willie Mitchell et al* convened once again in the main courtroom of the federal courthouse. The lawyers arrived first, chatting in the manner of people who had spent nearly four years and counting on the odyssey of this case. The defendants came next. While Shawn Gardner wore the blue work shirt of a lifer in state prison, Willie Mitchell sported comfortable baggy jeans and a stylish black shirt. Mitchell sauntered to his table, and spied the lone spectator in the courtroom's auditorium-style gallery of one hundred-plus seats, a slender black woman who looked to be in her late twenties. His eyes lit up as he smiled and mouthed "How are you?" "I'm good, I'm good" she murmured. "Your new lawyer—get his card!"

Judge Davis arrived last, emerging from a wooden door behind the bench, beneath oil portraits of judges from days gone by. The hearing will be short, he said; the purpose is to establish a schedule for future motions, and ultimately the trial. Davis and the lawyers spent the next twenty minutes trying find eight weeks of available courtroom time for ten busy lawyers plus the judge. Then, apropos of nothing, Shelton Harris stood up. "Good morning your honor," he began. Davis saw where this was going and cut him off. "I haven't recognized you yet, Mr. Harris. You'll have time to talk later," he said. "I accept your offer," Harris replied softly, and sat down.

The scheduling discussion continued; Mitchell rested his head in his arms as though bored. Finally, Judge Davis allowed Harris to speak. Harris launched into the now familiar oration—"I request you, the judge, close the accounts..." He spoke rapidly in a low, gravelly voice, as if he'd worked hard to memorize the speech and didn't want to leave anything out.

Harris finished, sat, and Judge Davis turned to the defendants. The speech you just gave has no legal meaning whatsoever, he said sternly. They were words in the English language, but they have no meaning as a matter of law. If, in future proceedings, you persist—even politely—in making these speeches, you face a severe risk of being expelled from the courtroom. The court also may conclude that you are waiving your right to appointed counsel, in which case you would have to represent yourself. That would be a sad day. "We are in recess," Davis said. He turned back toward the door to leave.

Then several things happened at once. Shawn Gardner, handcuffed, slumped in the arms of the federal marshals, who seized him beneath his armpits and dragged him across the courtroom toward the door. Willie Mitchell raised his right hand to speak, intent on giving his version of Harris' speech, but the marshals grabbed his arm and forced it down behind his back toward his left wrist, which was already cuffed. Mitchell struggled and yelled at his lawyer, "They got my arm in a chicken wing!" The marshals forcibly moved Martin and Harris toward the door. Judge Davis watched with consternation as they were dragged from his court.

Willie Mitchell and company won't go on trial until September, if then, and they won't face the death penalty, even though they probably deserve it if anyone does. But they will probably be convicted and spend the rest of their lives in federal prison, never to be heard from again, because in the end, the flesh-and-blood defense is no defense at all. The 14th Amendment didn't revoke Shawn Gardner's natural citizenship—it gave him protection under the law, and paved the way for another black man to judge his case. There's no international cabal of Jewish bankers conspiring against him—one of his lawyers, a professor at Howard University Law School, is Jewish. The secret histories and grand conspiracies that have fueled decades of right-wing paranoia, morphing to accommodate one doomed cause after another until finding an unlikely temporary home in a Baltimore lockup, are lies and nothing more.

As the marshals shoved the four men toward the courtroom door, back to the prison they'll never leave, they shook their heads and looked at each other smiling, as if to say right, right, isn't it always just like this? One of them let out a chuckle that rose above the din. Judge Davis turned to the court reporter. "Let the record show," he said, "that Mr. Harris is laughing." WM

Kevin Carey is the research and policy manager of Education Sector, an independent think tank in Washington, DC.

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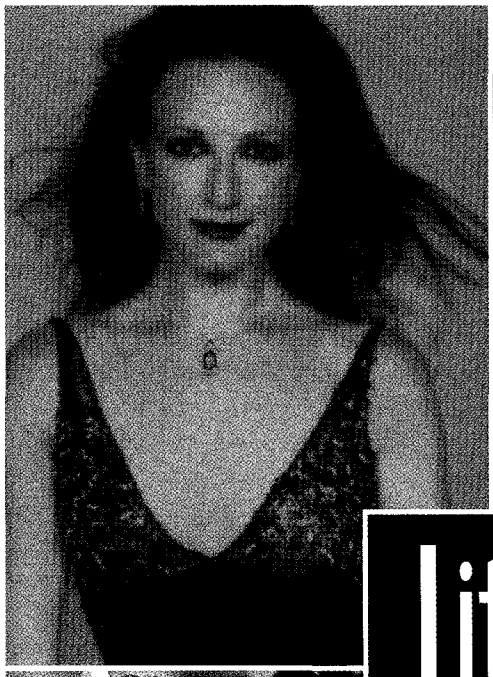

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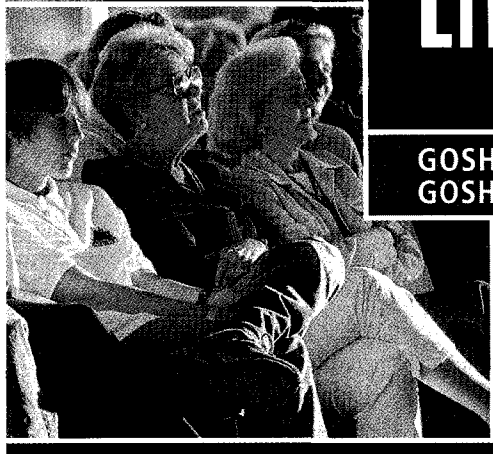

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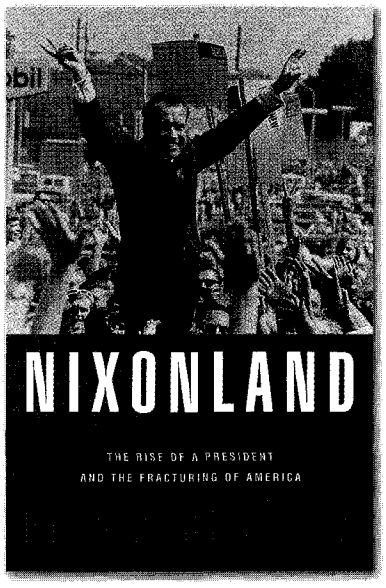
The End of Resentment

Has the well of middle class anger that Richard Nixon tapped finally run dry?

By Ed Kilgore



Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America

by Rick Perlstein
Scribner, 896 pp.

The best way to convey Rick Perlstein's achievement in writing *Nixonland* is to observe that he has taken one of the most endlessly chewed-over periods of American history, the late 1960s and early 1970s, and one of the most thoroughly analyzed American politicians, Richard Nixon, and come up with a fresh and convincing perspective on both.

Perlstein made his publishing bones with a widely praised 2002 book, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus*. *Nixonland* picks up where the earlier book's narrative sections leave off, after Lyndon Johnson's crushing landslide victory over Goldwater in 1964. But it's more than a sequel. Much of *Before the Storm* focused on the history and internal dynamics of the conservative movement that ultimately conquered American politics in the 1980s, 1990s, and beyond. *Nixonland* is an exceptionally broad and thorough social, cultural and political history of eight tumultuous years. It should quickly become the standard history of this period. And it sings with outstanding storytelling and insight. Even readers who reject Perlstein's interpretation of the Nixon era cannot help but get carried along by such instant classics as his hour-by-hour account of how the chaotic 1968 Democratic Convention looked on network television (a pitch-perfect account from my own heat-seared memories of the event, which occurred before Perlstein's birth).

The book's hypothesis is straightforward. Perlstein sets for himself the goal of explaining why the LBJ landslide of 1964 was followed so quickly by the Nixon landslide of 1972. His explanation is that what looked like a durable center-left consensus in 1964 actually disguised fault lines that produced a culture-based "fracturing" of the country, characterized by the defection of much of the white middle class from the New Deal-Great Society coalition. Richard Nixon, says Perlstein, was the perfect demiurge for this fracturing, as a man consumed by the very middle-class striver resentment of liberal elites and their political clients that he so successfully elicited in the electorate.

Perlstein uses a Nixon biographical detail to organize much of the book: the young Whittier College student's organization of an "outsider" social group, the Orthogonians, to rival Whittier's dominant Big Man On Campus group, the Franklins. Throughout his subsequent career, Nixon perpetually appealed to Orthogonian "silent majority" folk against the wealthy, sophisticated and fashionable Franklins of American society and politics, increasingly identified with the supposedly working-class-rooted Democratic Party.

As Perlstein explains, before the 1960s, Nixon warred with Franklins like Jerry Voorhis (his first congressional opponent); Alger Hiss (the darling of diplomatic elites, and the object of his first congressional anti-communist crusade); Helen Gahagan Douglas (his Hollywood-connected first senatorial opponent); Averill Harriman (the plutocratic Democrat who sneered at Nixon as a social inferior); Adlai Stevenson (whose haughty description of Nixon's constituency gave the book its title); and John F. Kennedy (the Senator from Camelot, whose family represented every privilege and advantage denied to the Whittier striver). But Nixon hit his stride in the mid-

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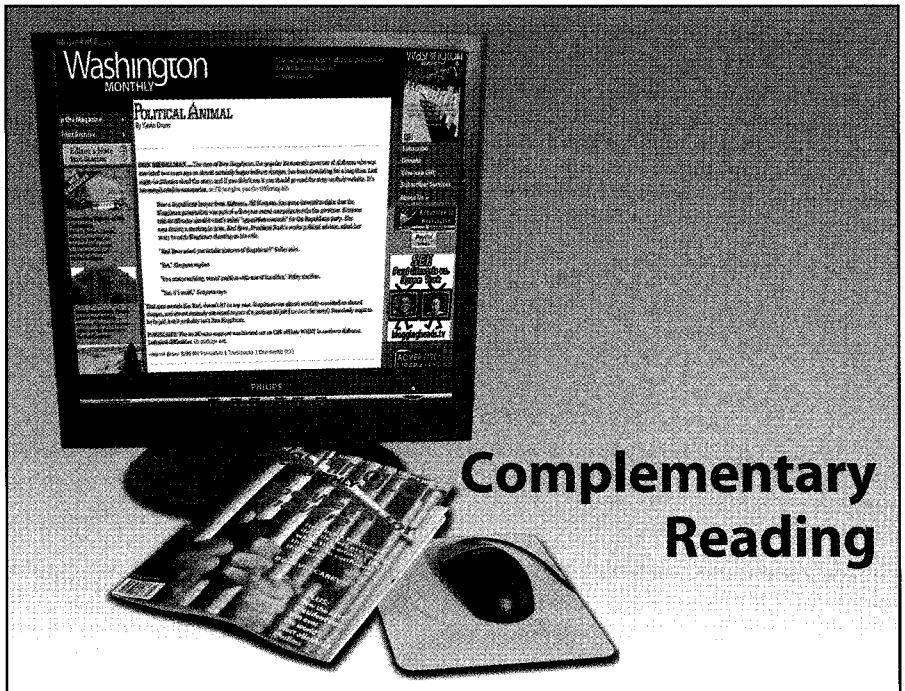

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1960s, when vast numbers of Americans who voted for LBJ and civil rights in 1964 reacted in Orthogonian revulsion to riotous students and rioting African-Americans: people who appeared to be elite liberalism's arrogant praetorian guard and ungrateful proletarian clientele.

Paradoxically, Richard Nixon appealed to the anger of middle-class Americans who mourned the loss of the LBJ consensus:

> *[This] man Nixon was ... stubbornly successful in answering Americans' yearning for quiet; but ... even so, in a complex admixture, Nixon also rose by stoking and exploiting anger and resentment, rooted in the anger and resentment at the center of his character.*

Hence, Nixon's not-so-silent majority in 1972.

Rick Perlstein is most definitely a Man of the Left, but as in his earlier book, *Nixonland* benefits from his ability to understand and even sympathize with those who held views that he considers abhorrent. Moreover, unlike many baby boomer liberal observers, Perlstein isn't enraptured by "the kids" of the anti-Vietnam War movement, despite his cold assessment of that war's cynical immorality; and he doesn't have much use for the "shoot the pigs" wing of the post-MLK civil rights movement, despite his careful documentation of police abuses in anti-riot exercises. He's particularly acerbic about the New Politics activists and their glitterati allies who helped make George McGovern's 1972 campaign such a ripe target for Nixon.

In terms of Nixon himself, Perlstein pulls no punches: he was a "brilliant and tormented" man whose limitless ambitions and insecurities were not constrained by any ideological commitments or conscience. In his obsessive drive to win reelection in 1972, Nixon embraced wage-and-price controls; temporary pro-union policies; the famous opening to China; a deliberate government-spending-driven inflation of the economy; and an incredibly cynical (given his own much earlier private assessment that South

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Vietnam was inherently untenable) manipulation of the Vietnam War, sacrificing hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese and American lives in order to arrange Henry Kissinger's "peace is at hand" statement just prior to Election Day. Although Perlstein ends his book before the Watergate investigation, he makes it abundantly clear that Richard Nixon was the White House's most extreme cheerleader for the illegal measures and "dirty tricks" that characterized the scandal which ultimately brought him down.

The broader questions raised by *Nixonland* are the parallels between the Nixon era and later political and cultural trends, including those of the present decade. Perlstein clearly believes Nixon, his allies and enemies unleashed divisive forces that still dominate our politics. "How did Nixonland end? It has not ended yet," he says in the book's final words.

One of the book's great contributions will be to instruct today's political activists, particularly younger readers who may know little of Nixon other than his disgrace and resignation, that the conservative "politics of polarization" were not invented by Lee Atwater or Karl Rove. Indeed, in his first major speech as Nixon's "attack dog," Vice President Spiro Agnew (who comes across as Nixon's Nixon, a man obsessed with "order" and his own personal status who was, ironically, felled by a sordid and petty kickback scheme) explicitly called for a "positive polarization" of middle-class Americans against the cultural and political dissidents he famously described in the best Orthogonian fashion as "an effete corps of impudent snobs."

If anything, George W. Bush, that birthright Franklin who invented an Orthogonian identity for himself, is a piker compared to Nixon when it comes to the ruthless exploitation of social resentments and fear. Yes, Bush, like Nixon, has promoted a politicization of the federal government, expressed regular contempt for constitutional and legal restrictions on his power, and stubbornly prosecuted a failed war for no better reason than the refusal to admit failure. Bush, like Nixon, has stimulated, and often seems to welcome, a visceral hatred among his progressive enemies. And Bush, like Nixon, is ending his two-term administration in virtual ruin, though under less lurid circumstances. But due to incompetence or ideology, or laziness, or simply the limitations imposed by objective reality, Bush has never achieved Nixon's level of demonic efficiency in harnessing cultural furies to his own political agenda. As Perlstein points out, today's political adversaries may hate each other, but at the apex of Nixon's power, some of them literally wanted to kill each other.

There are signs that the progressive opposition to Nixon-Bush politics is finally getting its act together. Thanks to economic and demographic changes, the New Politics coalition of young voters, minorities, and socially progressive upscale voters is now large enough to constitute the core of a durable political majority.

If we are still living in Nixonland, is it ever to end? It's sometimes easy to forget that in the wake of Watergate, the Democratic landslide of 1974, the bland presidency of Gerald Ford and the election of Jimmy Carter, there was a strong sense among most observers that the hysteria of the Nixon era was gone for good, and even if the "consensus" of the early 1960s would not return, some boundaries on divisiveness had been reestablished. We know now that these hopes were to be regularly dashed.

It appears now, however, that the conservative politics of middle-class cultural resentment may have finally reached its point of rapidly diminishing returns, starved slowly by a lack of external nourishment. Despite sharp public divisions over the war in Iraq, National Guard troops aren't shooting students on college campuses. The abuses at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib have aroused reasonably general condemnation, not the vengeful mass popular support attracted by the perpetrators of My Lai. The contemporary symbols of Scary Black Anger are hip-hop celebrities and a certain minister from Chicago, not armed militants. Race-fueled political issues like crime, welfare and busing have significantly abated. Even if we are still living in Nixonland, the landscape is less perilous.

Moreover, there are signs that the progressive opposition to Nixon-Bush politics is finally getting its act together. Thanks to economic and demographic changes, the New Politics coalition of young voters, minorities, and socially progressive upscale voters heralded by McGovern advisors like Fred Dutton is now large enough to constitute the core of a durable political majority. Internet-based fundraising is outmatching the transactional financial arrangements pioneered by Nixon's 1972 reelection campaign and perfected by Bush-era Republicans. Amidst general fatigue over the political warfare of the Clinton and Bush eras, the Democratic nominee for president is explicitly calling for a truce in the divisions that can be traced directly back to the Nixon period. And even the GOP is staking its hopes for retaining the White House on a nominee whose personal "story" represents the one non-controversial memory of the Vietnam War, the heroic POW.

I don't know if Rick Perlstein plans to continue his remarkable account of recent political history with books on such later conservative figures as Ronald Reagan (a significant figure in both of his previous works) and George W. Bush. But if he does, I profoundly hope that after more than four decades heavily influenced by the bitter legacy of Richard Nixon, the next Perlstein book can be confidently described as history, not prophecy. WM

Ed Kilgore is managing editor of the *Democratic Strategist*, an online magazine and weblog.

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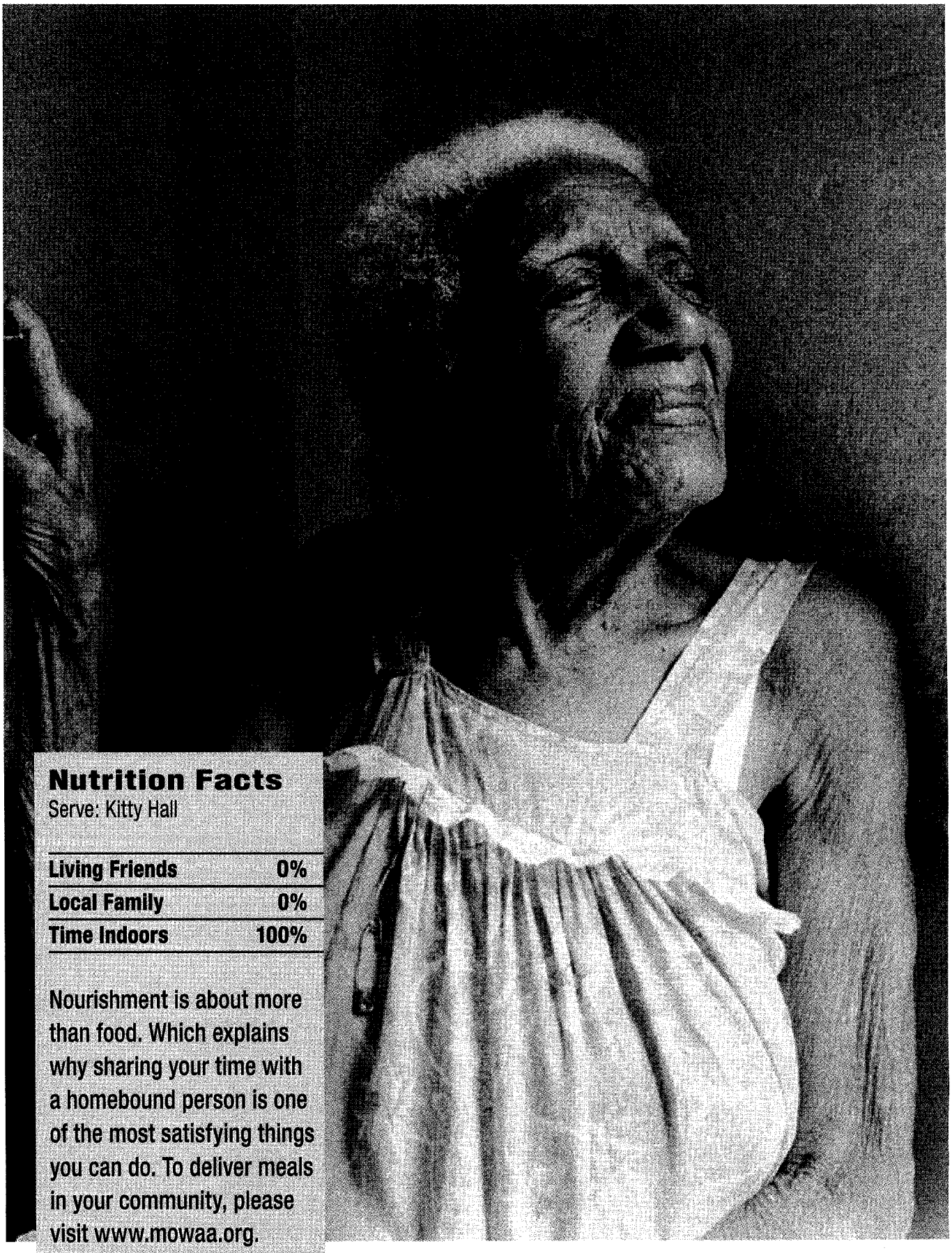

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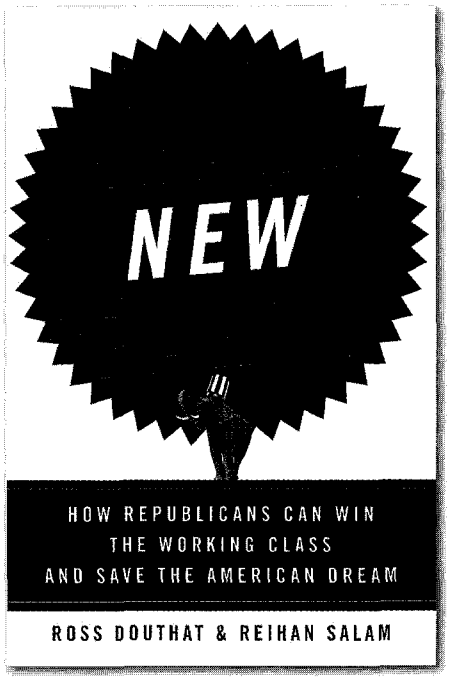
Grandiose Old Party

Two young conservatives have a plan to revitalize the GOP: embrace massive social engineering.

By Kevin Drum



Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream

By Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam
Doubleday, 256 pp.

During the week I spent reading Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam's *Grand New Party*, I had half a dozen different reactions to it. First I was annoyed. Then intrigued. Then, at various times, impressed, curious, and taken aback. And finally a bit baffled. But that's a good thing, right? Better than being bored, certainly.

Let's start with "annoyed." Douthat and Salam, a pair of young conservatives who currently work at the *Atlantic*, believe that the Republican Party needs to grapple with the economic concerns of the working class more seriously if it's going to become a party with long-term majority prospects. To set the stage for their recommendations, though, they first offer up a short political history of the past century or so, paying special attention to the relationship of both major parties to the economic and social concerns of the working class.

Douthat and Salam are primarily concerned here with how politics intersects with the family, a subject that modern liberals are famously a bit squeamish about, and they start by reminding us that, early in the 20th century, progressives were concerned about the effects of urbanization on family life in much the same way that today's conservatives are concerned about rap lyrics and sex education. Maternalists like Jane Addams and Josephine Baker, for example, fought for the eight-hour workday and nationwide maternity clinics partly because they were alarmed at the effect of widespread industrialization on family life. Later, a similar ethos infected the New Deal, which was largely designed to ensure that men earned a "family wage"—that is, enough to support a traditional household without the need for women to work outside the home.

All good stuff. But then, out of nowhere, they interrupt their narrative to make sure we also know that the New Deal's "relentless scapegoating of business may have actually worsened the Depression." Wha...? Where'd that come from? I'm not going to have to endure a bunch of winger rants about FDR, am I? Then, a few pages (and a couple of decades) later, we're told that, although conservatives failed to support civil rights in the 1960s, it's unfair to hold that against them. "The racist smear is one of liberalism's most wearying rhetorical tropes," they say. Yikes. Am I going to have to read this entire book through gritted teeth?

In a word, no. As it turns out, Douthat and Salam do have an occasional tendency to stud their book with movement conservative landmines, but if you take a deep breath it's not so bad. They may protest too strongly about the racist underpinnings of things like states' rights federalism and the "law and order" movement, but if I were a conservative who was born more than a decade after the Civil Rights Act was passed, I might be tired of everything I believe in being attributed to racism too. And besides, sometimes the liberal imputation of racism to practically everything really is a wearying trope, isn't it?

So, let's move on to "intrigued." Douthat and Salam may take a few shots at liberals here and there, but they take plenty of shots at their fellow conservatives too. That's a lot more fun. What's more, many of their criticisms of both liberal and conservative tropes are worth listening to.

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In fact, for the most part Douthat and Salam are refreshingly free of the siege mentality that infects so many conservatives of the Gingrich/DeLay/Bush generation, which allows them to take on the Republican Party's longstanding fealty to big business and the rich with neither defensiveness nor credulity. Of the post-9/11 Bush years, for example, they say:

> *The economy recovered relatively swiftly ... [but] the working class was getting left behind again. The median income stagnated, the average hourly wage declined, and inequality increased. Wealth was being created at a breakneck pace, but it fell into fewer and fewer hands—not just the top 10 or 25 percent this time, but the top 1 percent, the CEOs and hedge fund managers, a trend ripe for populist backlash.*

This is refreshing. Most conservatives play endless rhetorical and statistical games to deny that inequality is increasing or that the working class is stagnating. But Douthat and Salam understand something many of their co-religionists don't: that it's not possible to address working class economic concerns until you admit that the working class *has* legitimate economic concerns in the first place—and that eventually the GOP is going to run out of ways to tap dance around this.

If conservatives keep singing the same old small government song forever, liberals are eventually going to swoop in and take over the government for a generation.

While their book is aimed at conservatives, this candid admission also helps give them the credibility to make arguments that liberals could stand to listen to as well. For example, there's the simple observation that although the working class has stagnated in recent decades, it's stagnated at a relatively high level. You can pick your statistic—household income, family income, prime working age income, whatever—but they all tell the same story: Americans are pretty well off. This isn't to deny the growing problems of income inequality and middle class stagnation, but rather to suggest that addressing it requires a different style of political rhetoric than it would if, as in the Depression, a quarter of the country were unemployed.

In fact, Douthat and Salam argue persuasively that this state of affairs—relative economic security, not economic distress—is the reason that so many white working class voters have abandoned the Democratic Party even as Republicans continue to be the party of plutocrats and corporations. If they were as poorly off as they were in the 1930s, abortion and gay rights wouldn't mean much to them, but as long these voters are comfortable—not rich, maybe, but not too badly off, either—then why not vote for the party that represents their social values?

This is especially true, Douthat and Salam argue, since maintenance of traditional social values has more economic value to the working class than it does to the college-educated middle class. In the well-off suburbs, divorce is rare, crime is low, and kids mostly don't have children out of wedlock. What's more, when those things do happen, the better-off classes have the resources to deal with them. To the upper middle class, then, the constellation of issues revolving around the breakdown of the traditional family seems a distant concern.

But what about working class communities? Liberals tend to poke fun at the fact that the very communities that complain most about divorce and crime and single parenthood are the same ones that have the highest divorce rate, the most crime, and the greatest incidence of single parenthood. Hypocrites! If they're so worried about this stuff, why not lead by example?

But as Douthat and Salam point out, doesn't it make sense that the people who are most often face-to-face with these problems are also the ones who are most concerned about them? Put that way, of course it does. What's more, things like divorce, single-parent families, and teen pregnancy incur costs that are harder to deal with the poorer you are, so to a large extent, when working class whites vote for socially conservative Republicans they're also voting their economic self-interest.

This is thought-provoking stuff, but it only gets you so far. After all, at some point, after working-class wage stagnation has gone on too long and inequality has gotten too high, promises from liberals of concrete assistance start to sound more attractive than yet another round of gay bashing or fruitless temper tantrums against fifty-year-old Supreme Court decisions. Douthat and Salam are well aware of this. In fact, this is what spurred them to write *Grand New Party* in the first place: a fear that Democrats might finally get their act together and provide a robust, semi-populist agenda that would "wed the free-market centrism of the Clinton years to a revived push for European-style social democracy, the American Left's age-old dream."

But this is where Douthat and Salam start to run into problems—and it's why, in the end, I found myself a bit baffled by *Grand New Party*. Their agenda is fundamentally natalist: they want to protect the traditional family and they want that traditional family to have plenty of kids. To accomplish that, they propose a variety of initiatives to reduce out-of-wedlock births, make divorce harder, use the tax code to subsidize childbearing, and so forth. The problem here—and it's one they seem to understand—is that there's something fundamentally hypocritical about this: it involves an extensive program of social engineering being put in place by conservative elites who don't really need (or want to be bound by) any of its rules themselves. They're only doing it because—well, because the lower classes need it. It's for their own good. In one sense, this arguably isn't as bad as it sounds. Hypocrisy is vastly overrated as a sin, after all. But even with plenty of lipstick on this pig, it's still not very pretty. And not likely to gain much support, either. Liberals, who are at least open to the idea of social engineering, aren't going to support this particular

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version of it, and conservatives, who might very well cotton to its goals, are allergic to social engineering. This is very big government indeed, and how many conservatives are likely to support that?

Not many, perhaps, but Douthat and Salam think they'd better start: they argue that America likes big government, America wants big government, and if conservatives keep singing the same old small-government song forever, liberals are eventually going to swoop in and take over the government for a generation. But even if they're right about that—even if they're right that conservatives need to wake up and smell the coffee—the scope of their proposals is fairly breathtaking.

Among other things, they propose a massive overhaul of the tax code to encourage family building; subsidies (or pension credits) to parents who care for children at home; more spending on highways; a national health insurance plan very similar to the one most Democrats support today; job subsidies for entry-level jobs; summer enrichment programs for poor kids; more cops on the street; a new school funding formula; and a more progressive payroll tax.

The tax plan, they say, is revenue neutral, and the job subsidy program they cost out at $85 billion per year. The other programs they don't put a price tag on. But my very rough estimate pegs the whole thing at several hundred billion dollars per year. Put a gun to my head and I'd guess $500 billion. Like all good social program enthusiasts, they claim that these things will eventually pay for themselves either partly or wholly, but even a liberal like me, who's practically hardwired to believe that well-designed social programs can kinda sorta pay for themselves, finds that hard to swallow. No matter how you slice it, this is a very big agenda.

Even so, a liberal party might support it. Maybe. But a conservative party? Even a big government conservative party? It's hard to see how. This would be the biggest expansion of the social welfare state since the New Deal, and it's difficult to see how this would fly in a Republican Party that still worships at the altar of Grover Norquist. "I don't want to abolish government," he famously said, "I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub." As of last week, this was still the official position of about 99 percent of the conservative movement.

Grand New Party, then, should probably be taken as the political equivalent of raising the alert level to DEFCON 2: continue along the Norquistian path, Douthat and Salam warn, and the GOP will be doomed to irrelevance for a generation as young people flock to the Democratic Party and stay there for life. Alternatively, admit that Americans like big government and then, as a sort of consolation prize, at least retain the ability to wrest the *direction* of big government away from liberals. This is either very courageous or very quixotic, but at least it's not timid. I look forward to the sequel. WM

Kevin Drum edits the weblog Political Animal and is a contributing writer for the *Washington Monthly*.

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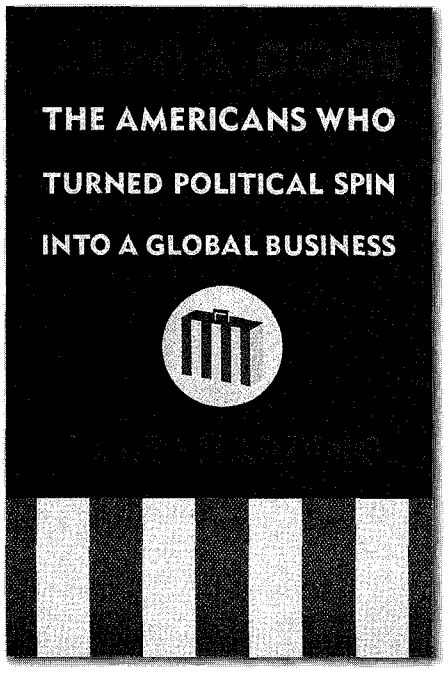
Contract With Armenia



Alpha Dogs: The Americans Who Turned Political Spin Into a Global Business

By James Harding

Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 252 pp.

America may be no good at exporting democracy, but it's great at exporting political consultants.

By Joshua Green

A few years ago, I wrote a long article on Karl Rove's history of dirty tricks that got a lot of attention in a place I didn't expect: Australia. The radio and television producers calling from Down Under explained that the negative style of politics that Rove is famous for was dominating their national election. They were calling halfway around the world because they were looking for information on the source. I'd never thought of American politics as a form of cultural imperialism, but indeed it is one: like the early American settlers who spread smallpox to the Indians, American political consultants have carried their methods across the globe.

How this happened is the subject of James Harding's book, *Alpha Dogs: The Americans Who Turned Political Spin Into a Global Business*. Harding, an editor at the *Times* of London, tells the story of David Sawyer and Scott Miller, a documentary filmmaker and ad man, respectively, who teamed up to establish an unlikely consulting firm in the late 1970s that Harding credits with spurring this dubious form of globalization. Sawyer and Miller weren't the first political consultants to work abroad. But during the 1980s their firm became the biggest. "They seized upon the opportunity of taking the American campaign ethic overseas," Harding writes, "and became the progenitors of a discreet international industry in American political know-how." At its height, he claims, the Sawyer Miller Group touched more than a billion people in twenty-six countries—a bigger global reach than McDonald's.

Like a lot of successful people in politics, the firm's founders came into the field almost by accident. Sawyer had just completed an Oscar-nominated documentary about mental patients when he was approached by a Pennsylvania gubernatorial candidate to shoot a biopic in the newly fashionable verité style. He soon found himself in heavy demand. Miller was a frustrated Madison Avenue star—he coined the phrase, "Have a Coke and a smile!"—who longed for meaningful work in a smaller firm. The pair quickly gained a reputation in Democratic circles as being masters of the emerging medium of television, which was revolutionizing the world of politics.

Like the early American settlers who spread smallpox to the Indians, American political consultants have carried their methods across the globe.

Sawyer Miller enjoyed modest success in U.S. politics, but the 1980s were not banner years for the Democratic Party. David Sawyer had worked as a consultant in the Venezuelan election of 1973. As television spread throughout Latin America and other parts of

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the world, consultants like Sawyer skilled in producing televised political ads found they could market themselves in foreign countries, often for a lot of money. Soon, Sawyer Miller consultants were jetting around the globe and running polished, American-style campaigns in places like the Philippines, Colombia, Israel, Nigeria and Sudan.

As one disillusioned partner noted when he finally left the firm, "Good fees never come with good causes."

It was a glamorous lifestyle that even captured Hollywood's attention. The 1986 Sidney Lumet movie *Power* (reportedly Rove's favorite) starred Richard Gere as a jet-setting political operative and playboy whose character was based on David Sawyer. In addition to the glamour, Harding sees a strain of crusading idealism. He argues that one important effect of the Sawyer Miller consultants was to help usher in democracy in places like the Philippines and Chile, which lacked it, by getting new leaders elected.

While true in a limited sense, Harding imbues his subjects with high-flown principles they seem not always to deserve. Though Sawyer Miller was considered a Democratic firm domestically, they often didn't hesitate to work for less-than-progressive "darker" regimes abroad, including dictators in Panama and Sudan. They were quite upfront about why. "I just want to be clear," a Sawyer Miller consultant tells a new recruit. "What we want to do, what I want to do is make a shitpot full of money."

As the 1980s progressed, money became an ever-greater focus. Sawyer Miller took on more corporate work, carving out a niche in corporate crisis communication that included tobacco companies and many of the major insider-trading defendants on Wall Street. Its dwindling roster of political clients tended toward the unsavory. The firm was listed among the "Torturer's Lobby" in a report issued by a Washington think tank. As one disillusioned partner noted when he finally left the firm, "Good fees never come with good causes." In the end, Miller quit and Sawyer was pushed out by cutthroat junior partners. The firm was eventually subsumed by a public relations conglomerate.

By the time of Sawyer Miller's demise, however, global political spin was a crowded, competitive field. What's most striking about Harding's deeply researched and well-told book is how pervasive and indistinct American-style politics abroad really is: aided by U.S. consultants, Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi touted a "Contract with the Italian People" drawn up by the same team that designed Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America." A few years after Bill Clinton was elected on the refrain, "Opportunity, Responsibility, and Community," his advisors had Britain's Tony Blair parroting the same phrase. And if the continuing calls I get from the other side of the world are any indicator, the politics of Rove remain alive and well in Australia.

Harding also offers convincing evidence that foreign work has had important effects on U.S. politics that remain little understood. In the mid-1990s, for example, Israel abandoned its party-based method of choosing a leader in favor of the American system of electing one directly. The 1999 Israeli election that pitted Ehud Barak against Benjamin Netanyahu featured a veritable all-star team of U.S. consultants, including James Carville, Stanley Greenberg, and Bob Shrum. Determined to prevent his candidate from being branded "soft on terrorism," Shrum highlighted Barak's military record and battlefield valor, and sought to portray the incumbent Netanyahu as an out-of-touch and overly ambitious pol. It worked for Barak, who won a sweeping victory. But it failed five years later when Shrum ran essentially the same campaign for a U.S. presidential candidate, John Kerry.

After the 2001 election, Israel decided that American-style politics was perhaps not such a great thing after all; it returned to the old system of electing its prime minister by party. In that, it is a rare exception. For better or worse, the effects of the revolution Sawyer Miller set off in the 1980s have spanned the globe and seem far too deeply entrenched to undo. WM

Joshua Green is a senior editor at the *Atlantic*.

Unconventional Wisdom

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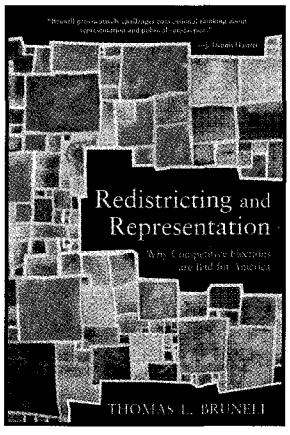

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Thomas Brunell

Argues for the "radical" notion that redistricting should be about uniting voters rather than dividing them.

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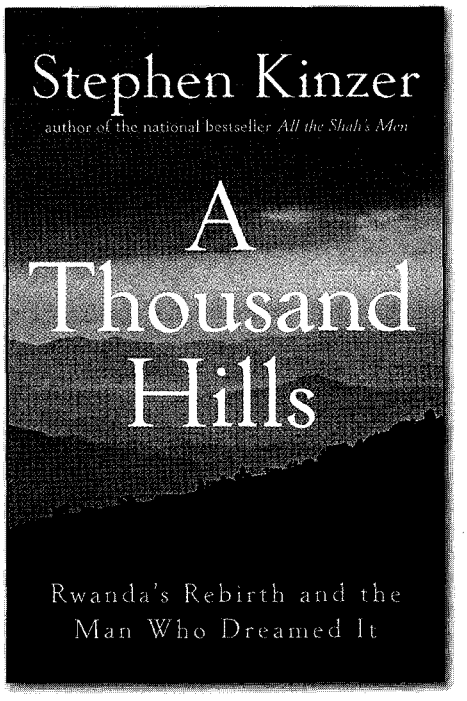
Soldier of Good Fortune

Rebel leader Paul Kagame ended the Rwandan genocide. Has he also made that country a model for the rest of Africa?

By Joshua Hammer



A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It

by Stephen Kinzer
Wiley, 400 pp.

In early May 1994, one month into the Rwandan genocide, I was driving down a mountain road in northern Rwanda when my car was overtaken by a speeding convoy. Curious, I followed the vehicles into a nearby compound, where I found myself the only correspondent at a meeting between Paul Kagame, chief of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, and General Roméo Dallaire, commander of the United Nations forces. At the time, the mass murder of the Tutsi population, carried out mostly by Hutu *interahamwe* militias in league with their military sponsors, was in full swing: eight thousand civilians were dying every day, hacked to death at road blocks, blown to pieces by grenades as they sought refuge inside churches. Kagame's RPF was advancing across the country in one of the greatest military campaigns of recent times, and would eventually send the *genocidaires* fleeing into Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). I vividly recall Kagame—pipe-cleaner thin, bespectacled, looking more like a gangly graduate student than the leader of a guerrilla army—emerging stone-faced from his encounter with Dallaire, during which, I was later told, he had scoffed at a UN pledge to send in more troops and vowed that the RPF would pursue total victory. There was a grim determination, a contained ferocity to Kagame that I would never forget; I would encounter it again months later, in the ruins of Kigali, when I interviewed him for *Newsweek* and listened to him—in his thin, reedy voice—cast scorn on the outside world for its abandonment of Rwanda. His country was determined to make it on its own, he said, without the help of the United Nations or international aid agencies. "Rwanda can go it alone," he assured me.

In the decade and half since then, Kagame has been both canonized and vilified by the outside world. To some, he represents a model African leader—a heroic figure who has brought Rwanda back from the dead and achieved a degree of ethnic reconciliation and economic self-sufficiency that few could have imagined possible in the genocide's aftermath. To his opponents—and there are many of them—he's a ruthless autocrat who tolerates no dissent, oppresses the country's Hutu majority, and has turned a blind eye to the murder and mayhem carried out by his Tutsi brethren. Now comes Stephen Kinzer's *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It*, one of the first full-length biographies of the rebel commander-turned-Rwandan president. The title suggests a hagiography, and Kinzer makes no secret of his admiration for Kagame as both a military tactician and a political leader. (Kagame sat for more than thirty hours of interviews with the author, and his willingness to cooperate certainly helped burnish his image in this book.) But Kinzer, a veteran *New York Times* foreign correspondent and the author of the bestselling *All the Shah's Men*, about the U.S.-backed overthrow of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran, is too seasoned a journalist to give Kagame a free ride. The result is a balanced look at how one man's doctrine of self-reliance has made his impoverished, decimated country a potential model for the rest of Africa.

A Thousand Hills is really two books. The first half is a slam-bang narrative with echoes of Graham Greene and John Le Carré. Kinzer recounts the story—now familiar to most Rwanda watchers—of how Rwanda's Belgian post-World War I colonizers created an elite Tutsi overclass, then abruptly shifted their support to the majority Hutus in the years

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before Rwanda's independence. The newly empowered majority quickly exacted vengeance on their former Tutsi oppressors, carrying out a series of slaughters: In the so-called "practice genocide" of 1959, Kagame's family was saved from near-certain death by Rwanda's royal family (the queen was a cousin of Kagame's mother) who dispatched a chauffeur to whisk them to the palace as Hutu marauders closed in on their hillside. The Kagame family eventually joined the Tutsi diaspora in Uganda. Grudgingly tolerated by the murderous Idi Amin, and his successor, Milton Obote, suffering discrimination and daily slights, the Tutsis dwelled for the most part in refugee camps in southwestern Uganda. There, Kagame and a small group of Tutsi students nurtured their dream of building a rebel army and returning to their homeland by force.

Much has already been written about how the Rwandan Patriotic Front took shape in the refugee camps of Uganda, and became battle-hardened while fighting for the National Liberation Front, the army of Yoweri Museveni, which seized control of Uganda in 1986. But Kinzer's reporting turns up a trove of fresh information. I was unaware, for example, that the integration of Rwandan Tutsi soldiers into the NLF and later, the Ugandan army, was part of a methodical covert strategy by Kagame—Museveni's director of military intelligence—and RPF cofounder Fred Rwigyema, Museveni's chief of staff:

> *Together, they conceived one of the boldest and largest-scale covert operations ever to spring from the conspiratorial mind. There were already about fifteen hundred Rwandans in the Ugandan army; Fred and Paul would quietly encourage more to enlist. Then, using their command positions and influence, they would discreetly guide the careers of these soldiers, steering as many as possible to training courses and field commands.*

According to this version of events, which was apparently related to Kinzer by Kagame himself, Museveni was taken by surprise when Rwigyema led a Tutsi force—bearing Ugandan weapons, driving Ugandan trucks and jeeps, and wearing Ugandan uniforms with the army insignias torn off—across the border into Rwanda in November 1990. (Rwigyema was shot dead on the second day of the operation. Kagame was in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas for military training when the invasion began; his frantic journey back to Uganda via New York, London, Addis Ababa and Nairobi, narrowly escaping arrest by hostile security forces in both African capitals, is one of the most gripping sequences in the book.) Museveni later turned into one of the RPF's biggest supporters, allowing the rebels to travel through his country at will and channeling them weapons and other supplies. That the initial RPF attack turned into a rout was no tribute to the ability of the Rwandan government army, whom Kinzer describes as ill equipped and poorly trained. Rather, the Hutu supremacist regime led by President Juvenal Habyarimana was saved solely by French special forces, which pounded the Tutsi rebels with artillery, inflicting devastating losses and driving them back across the border.

Kinzer unfolds the story of the 1994 genocide with fine pacing and clarity, drawing heavily on Romeo Dallaire's memoir, *Shake Hands with the Devil*. The basic facts have been recounted many times, but they lose none of their power in Kinzer's retelling: Habyarimana's being dragged, reluctantly, to Arusha to sign a power-sharing agreement with the hated Tutsi adversaries. The covert preparations for slaughter of 1.2 million Tutsis by the *akazu*, the radicals led by the dictator's wife. Dallaire's desperate, futile memos to craven UN bureaucrats in New York, begging for authorization to raid arms depots and crack down on the *interahamwe* militias. The downing of the presidential jet on the evening of April 6, 1994. The shameful withdrawal of all but a handful of UN soldiers in the wake of the killing of ten Belgian peacekeepers. The 100-day genocide, carried out by machete, grenade, and bullet, with active French support.

The second half of the book is more problematic for Kinzer. Up until this point he's had a straightforward story to tell: how Kagame and his ragtag force, abandoned by the outside world, took on an army of French-backed killers, and drove them to defeat. The plot gets murkier in the post-genocide era, when heroic victory gave way to moral ambiguities and controversy over human rights and other issues. Kinzer charts the post-genocide guerrilla war waged by remnants of the Hutu force in Zaire, the 1996 invasion of that country by Kagame's army, the crafting of a rudimentary justice system, the sprouting up of businesses, and the sputtering reconciliation process, Here, the material is fresher, and Kinzer's first-person reportage lends a degree of immediacy that was missing from the first half of the book. But the narrative loses focus, and what started as a compelling story becomes an often meandering, inconclusive tour of contemporary Rwnada.

Kagame's approach to poverty relief is one part self-actualization seminar, one part Rick Warren-style evangelism.

Kagame's reporting about the reconciliation process is nicely nuanced. He describes the difficulties of dispensing justice in a country where 10 percent of the population were victims and perhaps 30 percent were murderers. He visits a *gacaca*— one of the homegrown courts set up to try killers—and a village where murderers and their intended victims live side by side in an awkward, painful, and often futile attempt to create mutual understanding. Kinzer also does a good job of navigating through the thicket of accusations leveled against Kagame and the RPF. Some of these seem patently absurd, such as the indictment of Kagame and a dozen other RPF leaders in a French court for masterminding the missile attack that brought down Habyarimana's plane. (The charge led Kagame to break off diplomatic relations with France, which bears singular responsibility for abetting the genocide and has never apologized.) Some have more weight, such as the alleged assassinations of the re-

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gime's outspoken enemies, including former cabinet minister Seth Sendashonga, gunned down in Nairobi in 1998. Kinzer cites Kagame's most persistent critic, Alison des Forges, the chief Rwandan specialist at Human Rights Watch, who describes contemporary Rwanda as a country where journalists face "intimidation, harassment and violence," and human rights advocates are "forced to flee the country for fear of being persecuted or arbitrarily arrested." But he tends to view such criticism as overhyped, and he largely accept Kagame's defense that Rwanda's traumatic recent history give the government some leeway in silencing or even locking up those who fan ethnic hatred or call for a new genocide. Kinzer is careful, however, to point out Kagame's autocratic tendencies, and to underscore the dangers inherent in stifling the development of real democracy in Rwanda.

Kinzer is less persuasive when he turns to an assessment of Kagame's economic philosophy. As Kinzer explains it, Kagame's approach to poverty relief is one part self-actualization seminar, one part Rick Warren-style evangelism. Kinzer cites a handful of Rwandan entrepreneurs who have built trendy restaurants, experimental farms and other successful businesses, and he cites Kagame's determination to quadruple the country's per capita income by 2020 by turning the country into the high-tech hub of Africa. It's a noble goal, and given Kagame's track record and strength of will, it's certainly not impossible. But there's little in the book to suggest that this still-impoverished, vastly overpopulated nation—95 percent of whose citizens still depend on subsistence agriculture to survive—can break out of the cycle of poverty within the next decade.

Oddly, I found that the biggest frustration reading Kinzer's admirable and often gripping book was getting a bead on its chief protagonist. This surely isn't Kinzer's fault. The author gives Kagame plenty of opportunity to tell his story, breaking away from the narrative to insert italicized excerpts of his interviews with the Rwandan leader. One encounters a figure steeled in hardship and seething with contempt for both the United Nations and the Western nations that turned their backs on his country. But there's a strangely detached quality to many of these passages. One hears about Kagame's courtship with his wife, for instance, but never gets any sense of what drew them together; one longs to hear how he felt when he encountered the churches filled with corpses of his Tutsi brethren, left behind by the fleeing Hutu army. This may reflect Kagame's personality: he's a former intelligence operative and trained soldier, who rose through the ranks by observing intently and revealing next to nothing about himself. I sensed that opaque quality when I interviewed Kagame in the rubble of Kigali more than a decade ago. Indeed, Kagame's very unknowability is part of his mystique. In *A Thousand Hills*, Kinzer may not have gotten Africa's most intriguing leader to bare his soul, but he comes closer than any other journalist yet to capturing the energy, will, self-discipline—and anger—that brought Rwanda back to life. WM

Joshua Hammer is a writer living in Berlin. He is most recently the author of *Yokohama Burning: The Deadly 1923 Earthquake and Fire That Helped Forge the Path to World War II*. Hammer is currently at work on a book about German colonial Africa and the twentieth century's first genocide.

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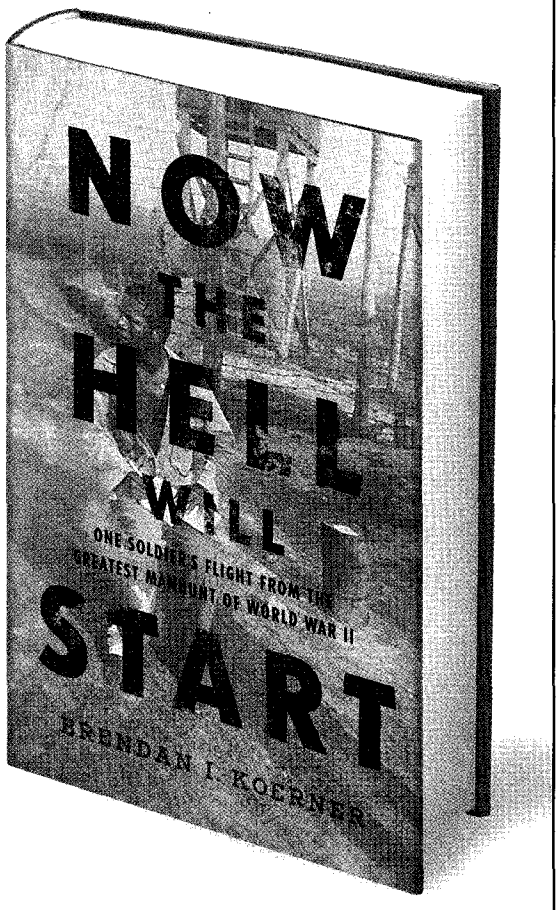

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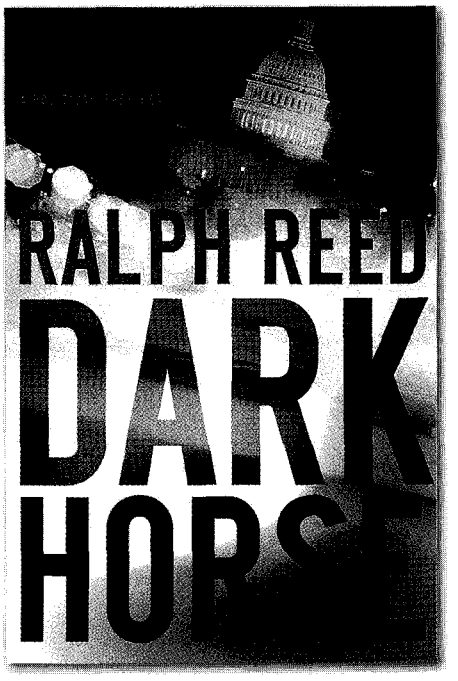
Roman à Scumbag

Ralph Reed was a despicable political operative. Maybe that's why his first novel is so good.

By Jamie Malanowski



Dark Horse: A Political Thriller
by Ralph Reed
Howard Books, 448 pp.

They are male and female, liberal and conservative, Democrat and Republican, legislator and executive, insider and publicity hound. They are Boxer and Gingrich, Libby and Clarke, Carter and Cheney and Mikulski and Perle, and to their corpus of earnest yet cynical, idealistic yet worldly, not-all-that-bad-but-never-quite-that-good novels, please add *Dark Horse* by Ralph Reed, the former executive director of the Christian Coalition, running buddy of Jack Abramoff, unsuccessful candidate, consultant, and now novelist. Patriotism may be the last refuge of a scoundrel, but churning out a potboiler seems to be the last refuge of the overweeningly confident.

Dark Horse is the story of Bob Long, the governor of California and candidate for the Democratic nomination for president. With this status he is afflicted only temporarily, since his all-but-secured nomination is swiftly undone through a tricky procedural maneuver sprung after some underhanded double-dealing by his rival, whose nefariousness is signaled by making him the liberal (!) Senate majority leader (!) from New Jersey (!) and giving him the very un-Bob Longish name of Salmon P. Stanley. Skunked by Stanley, Long declines an offer to join the ticket in the second spot, and shuffles back to Cali to observe from the sidelines Stanley's struggle against his GOP rival, the incumbent vice president—and very vice presidentially named—Harrison Flaherty.

Then, something unusual happens: God tells Bob to run for president as an Independent. Or signals him. Gives him a thumbs up. A nod and a wink. Whatever—the Lord works in mysterious ways, and here he opts against appearing as a burning bush or Morgan Freeman Jr. or any of his regular guises in favor of far subtler communication. What happens is that when Bob leaves the convention, he heads straight for the hospital, where his daughter is in labor. There is a complication—it's a breech birth, the baby is deprived of oxygen for a time—and Bob ends up in the chapel, where he offers God a proposition: "If you will spare my grandson's life, I will serve you for the rest of my life." As it turns out, God apparently accepts the deal. The infant recovers, and Bob concludes, as almost any of us would, that the best way to serve is to continue his campaign for the White House against that varmint Stanley and that weasel Flaherty.

> *Could* Dark Horse *be read as a clever blueprint for the next phase of the political evangelical movement—less confrontational, less partisan, more open?*

What's interesting is that although Long is the first Democratic candidate since 1996 who has partnered with a campaign advisor who might finally outsmart Karl Rove, Long no longer seeks signs from the Almighty about where to spend his money in Pennsylvania or what bumper-sticker design to approve. Instead, he turns to mortal helpmates, including the brilliant strategist Jay Noble, and the Christian movement leader Andy Stanton.

And they're off and running. Very soon we meet assorted vice presidential candi-

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dates, corrupt power brokers, sexy—check that—attractive press secretaries, a Middle Eastern terrorist, a Washington madam, a moderate African-American former general and secretary of state (where'd he dream that one up?), unctuous pundits, gotcha-driven reporters—why, everybody's here except a cute dog, a crippled kid and an old lady with a lot of gumption. Reed's predilection to pep up his narrative by throwing in new characters serves him pretty well for the first half of his book, but after the exciting assassination scene at the novel's midpoint, the continuous parade of newcomers (the Israeli ambassador on page 332, the Speaker of the House on page 393) splash the book with the kind of dismal anonymity conventionally found in a bad baseball team's late-season, scrubeenie-laden line up.

Reed writes with casual candor, generating the kind of frisson one gets when overhearing something that ought not to be said in front of the children.

As a prose stylist, Reed generally scales the heights of readability, which is no mean feat for an amateur, and every once in a while he really connects. "The aftermath of losing campaigns resembled a battlefield amputation more than putting the family dog to sleep. The end was quick and bloody" is a good line, and his characterization of a veteran political reporter made me laugh out loud: "Dorman was dressed for battle: rumpled jacket, wrinkled khakis, a knotted rep tie that hung at an odd angle, and tousled, matted grey hair." There are also a couple of places where Reed the novelist seemed to be allowing Reed the well-connected insider to show us something privileged and rare, such as the time we find Jay Noble, the not altogether noble strategist, meeting with his candidate but thinking about his take. "The consultants would split a 15 percent commission, or $18 million. Not bad for 100 days work," Reed writes with casual candor, generating the kind of frisson one gets when overhearing something that ought not to be said in front of the children. He has an excellent chapter in which a superbly-connected, dirty-up-to-his-eyebrows power broker visits the beach house of a constantly-trading zillionaire and glamorous wife. Although the scene ostensibly depicts Democrats (the spirits of Geffen and Burkle and other sharpies is conjured), the authority of this scene causes one to conclude that the Republican Reed must have spent time in these rooms, and his depictions of narcissism, materialism and appalling self-regard are sharp.

Indeed, Reed seems to have done a good enough job that he might have grounds to sue his editors for non-support. (On the other hand, he might have turned in a terrible manuscript, and his editors should be admired for their heroic rescue. Only they know the truth.) But sterner oversight might have tempered Reed's worst habits: a weakness for cliché ("The joke in the Senate was that the most dangerous place on the planet was between Tom Reynolds and a camera"; "He lived by the rule that when your opponent is busy committing suicide, get out of the way"); and a compulsion to cite historical antecedent. Phrases like "Vidkun Quisling, who collaborated with the Nazis"; "After Senator Thomas Eagleton stepped down" and "Look at Walsh during Iran-Contra" dot the landscape like cow patties. Some historical references in a political novel are inevitable, but you don't want the thing to read like an interview with Norman Ornstein.

If Reed were to stick with fiction-writing, he might get pretty good. The first half of the book is complex and the narrative moves briskly. But something happens in the second half; pages disappear in conversation and speechifying, and complications arise and are settled without drama. Situations that have been the grist for entire novels—the discovery of a prostitution ring, Electoral College dysfunction—are here just additional curves in the road. Reed doesn't help himself with the thinness of his characterizations. Some of these people are not much more than the Tommy Bahama and Versace brand names that they wear, and while the most fully drawn may be brilliant or greedy or cunning or shrewd, seldom are they afflicted with a psyche. Virtually none of them possesses an inner life.

The sole exception may be Bob Long, the candidate who grows more prayerful and devout. In Long and some of the other characters, Reed gives us a portrait of a Christian politician who is principled and inclusive, and who cares about issues like abortion just as much as he cares about poverty. Christians in this book function as an interest group, but Long is not an interests candidate, only a man of conviction. Strikingly, there are no Falwells or Robertsons or other freelance hate mongers condemning homosexuals or Muslims or ascribing the sufferings of the victims of a natural disaster to their insufficiency of belief. It is as though the last thirty years had never happened, as though chunks of Ralph Reed's resume had never happened. One wonders if *Dark Horse* should in some ways be read as a clever strategist's blueprint for the next phase of the political evangelical movement—less confrontational, less partisan, more open. A kinder, gentler Christianity, as it were.

Dark Horse, by the way, is published by a division of Simon & Schuster called Howard Books, which states that its purpose is to "increase faith in the hearts of growing Christians, inspire holiness in the lives of believers, and instill hope in the hearts of struggling people everywhere, because He is coming again." It is a book in which the numerous adult characters are aware of sexual possibilities, but in which the two most sexually explicit words in the book are "straddle" and "birthday suit." It is the only political novel that I can remember reading in which nothing—duplicity, disaster, or even murder—causes any character to use any profanity at any time at all. WM

Jamie Malanowski is managing editor of *Playboy* magazine and most recently the author of *The Coup*, a satirical novel about the nation's capital.

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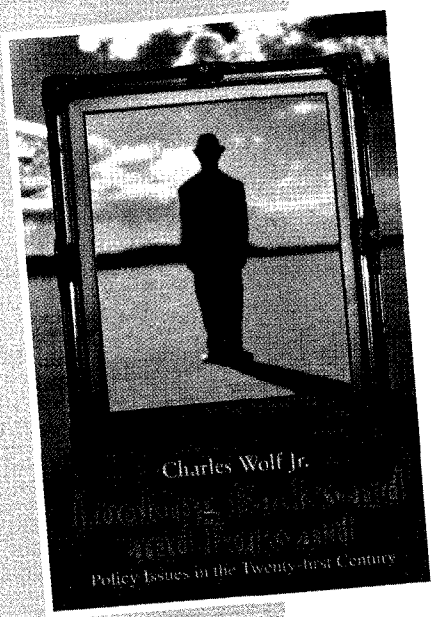

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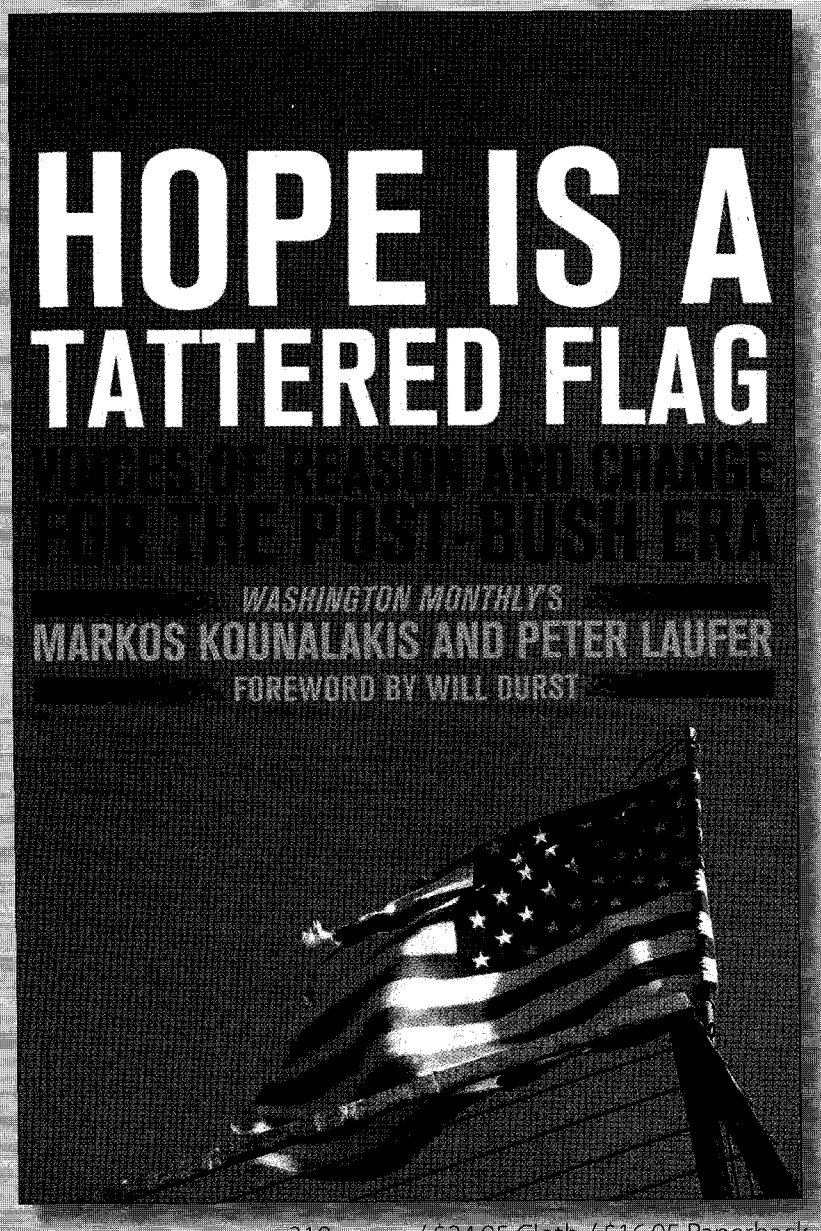

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